

Perspectives on the historiography of *neidan* studies:
approaching the state of the art in Western language
research of Daoist internal alchemy

Master's thesis
Study of religions
Faculty of Arts
University of Helsinki
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November 2020



Tiedekunta – Fakultet – Faculty Humanistinen tiedekunta		Koulutusohjelma – Utbildningsprogram – Degree Programme Kulttuuriperinnön maisteriohjelma
Opintosuunta – Studieinriktning – Study Track Uskontotiede		
Tekijä – Författare – Author Teemu Suuntamaa		
Työn nimi – Arbetets titel – Title Perspectives on the historiography of neidan studies: approaching the state of the art in Western language research of Daoist internal alchemy		
Työn laji – Arbetets art – Level Pro gradu -tutkielma	Aika – Datum – Month and year 11 / 2020	Sivumäärä– Sidoantal – Number of pages 102
Tiivistelmä – Referat – Abstract <p>Tutkielmassa tarkastellaan taolaisen sisäisen alkemian (<i>neidan</i>) länsimaisen tutkimuksen historiaa, sen lähestymistapoja ja tilaa. Näitä arvioidaan uskontotieteen näkökulmasta ja lähinnä englannin- ja ranskankieliseen tutkimuskirjallisuuteen perustuen. <i>Neidan</i>-tutkimus on osa taolaisuuden tutkimuksen (Daoist studies) kenttää, jossa taolaisuutta tarkastellaan monimuotoisena uskonnollisena perinteenä. Työ on diskursiivisesti orientoitunut, tutkimushistoriallinen ja metateoreettinen analyysi. Aineistona on alan tähänastinen länsimainen tutkimuskirjallisuus kokonaisuudessaan: artikkelit, artikkelikokoelmat, monografiat, väitöskirjat, bibliografiat ja käännökset. Työssä ei käsitellä kiinankielisiä alkuperäislähteitä eikä populaaria käännöskirjallisuutta. Aineistoa eritellään tutkielman teoriaosuuteen pohjaavan analyttisen kehyksen avulla.</p> <p><i>Neidan</i>-tutkimuksen vaiheita ja lähestymistapoja hahmotetaan nelijakoisen tutkimusohjelmien typologian kautta. Sisäistä alkemiaa ja sen aineistoja on tutkimuksessa lähestytty 1) osana tieteellisen ajattelun historiaa 1930–1980-luvuilla, 2) kiinalaisen kulttuurihistorian puitteissa 1920-luvulta alkaen, 3) diskurssina ja oppina 1970-luvulta alkaen sekä 4) uskontona monitieteellisen tutkimuksen kontekstissa 1990-luvulta alkaen. Paradigmaattisen hegemonian sijaan rinnakkaisten tutkimusohjelmien tulkitaan kilpailevan auktoriteetista puhua sisäisestä alkemiasta. Keskeiset tutkimusalakonventiot ovat kuitenkin pitkään liittyneet sinologiseen tutkimusperinteeseen. Tutkimusohjelmien ohella eritellään viisi sisäisen alkemian käsitteellistämisen tapaa, jotka kattavat tähänastiset määrittelyt pääpiirteissään. Sisäistä alkemiaa on kuvattu a) fysiologisenä alkemiana, b) symbolisena alkemiana tai valaistumisen tekniikkana; c) psykofyysisten menetelmien synteisinä; d) esoteeristen oppien ja menetelmien kirjona; sekä e) kontemplatiivisten harjoitteiden kenttänä. Näissä akateemisen diskurssin <i>neidan</i>-kuvauksissa heijastuvat perinteisen <i>neidan</i>-diskurssin painotukset: ne sijoittuvat linjalle kehokeskeisistä henkisiin tai mieltä korostaviin tulkintoihin. <i>Neidan</i>-kuvauksissa vaihtelua tapahtuu myös poissulkevasta ja selkeyttä korostavasta määrittelystä kohti avoimempaa ja sisäisen alkemian historialliset muodot laajasti kattavaa määrittelytapaa.</p> <p>Yleisen typologian jälkeen tarkastellaan kolmea erityisteeamaa: seksuaalialkemia, naisten alkemia ja varhainen Quanzhen-taolainen alkemia. Tämä rajaa suhteellisen laajaa tutkimusaineistoa. Aihepiirit käsittävät kuitenkin suuren osan tutkijoista sekä edustavan historiallisen otoksen yli tuhatvuotisesta <i>neidan</i>-perinteestä. Itsessään nämä kolme teemaa edustavat enemmän sisäisen alkemian reuna-alueita kuin sen valtavirtaa. Niiden käsittelyssä keskitytään aihealueiden tutkimuksen kiistoihin ja erimielisyyksiin, joiden myötä piirretään tarkempaa kuvaa tutkimuksen lähestymistavoista, intresseistä, ongelmista ja tutkimusohjelmien eroista. Erityisteemojen käsittelyn kautta tutkimuskentän tilaa hahmotetaan laajemmin.</p> <p>Tutkimusohjelmien, <i>neidan</i>-käsitteiden ja kiistakohtien paikantamisen lisäksi vastataan kysymyksiin tähänastisen tutkimuksen kattavuudesta, siitä miten tutkimus on vastannut postmodernin kritiikin haasteisiin sekä tutkimuksen tulevaisuudennäkymistä. Kehitysmahdollisuuksia ovat muun muassa refleksiivisyyden ja teoreettisen keskustelutason lisääntyminen, tutkimusalojen vuorovaikutus sekä vertaileva tutkimus. <i>Neidan</i>-tutkimuksen suhdetta uskontotieteeseen tarkastellaan vertailevan esoterismi-käsitteen kautta.</p>		
Avainsanat – Nyckelord – Keywords Neidan, taolainen sisäinen alkemia, taolaisuuden tutkimus, tutkimushistoria, tutkimuksen tila, diskurssitutkimus		
Säilytyspaikka – Förvaringställe – Where deposited Helsingin Yliopisto, Keskustakamituksen kirjasto		
Muita tietoja – Övriga uppgifter – Additional information Sisältää yhden liitteen		

An estimation of the state of a research field has proven an ambitious task. When beginning this work I knew it would take time. It took a few years longer. And it has surely taken more coffee and dark chocolate I can count. This is only a report of what has been done.

I extend my gratitude to Fabrizio Pregadio for strict comments; Neidan Studies Facebook group for resources and discussions; Helsinki University Library and the National Library of Finland for ordering all those peculiar books; my parents for occasional financial support; the forest, friends, and kids, for keeping me alive; Riikka, for loving patience and being there.

Everything that is said or written participates in a discourse, explicitly or implicitly, knowingly or without. And discourses construct, maintain, or deconstruct the social reality we participate in. As far as we participate in language, and operations guided by means of language, we are involved. Words are political, acts are political, thoughts are political, as they matter. Everyone is situated in this participation. Therefore, be mindful.

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1. TO BEGIN WITH

What is it? This thesis concerns the historiography of the study of Daoist internal alchemy, *neidan*. *Neidan* studies may be considered an academic subfield of the emerging field of Daoist Studies, with an interest toward Daoism as a religious tradition. The work is a discourse-oriented, research-historical and (meta)theoretical analysis, grounded in second hand materials (articles, monographs, dissertations, bibliographies, translations), and does not deal with primary sources, written in literary Chinese. This work attempts to provide a state of the art perspective to *neidan* studies today.

Internal alchemy, *neidan*,¹ refers broadly to a contemplative self-cultivation doctrine and methodology (an embodied spiritual practice or a transformative practice) aiming at transcendence (expressed as immortality or union with the Dao), and applied widely in all contemporary Daoist sects of China, monastic, liturgic, as well as lay traditions. Its first traces in literature appear in the eighth century. As a cultivation practice it gained wide popularity since the Song dynasty (960–1279). Among researchers, it is conventionally separated from external alchemy (*waidan*), laboratory alchemy, which aims to create an elixir of immortality through the refinement and usage of often poisonous substances, ritual application and cosmological correspondences. Internal alchemy borrows the alchemical symbolism of *waidan*, but states that the ingredients and the instruments of the process are to be found within the practitioner's body, or self. A form of late Chinese mysticism, the aim of *neidan* practice is to transform the cosmological multiplicity into unity, perceived as the eternal Dao. This is to be reached through an intensive work on cultivating the fine substances ("three treasures") of the human body and being. External alchemy is only one among several other traditional influences in the development of *neidan*. *Neidan* may be, in certain terms, considered within the comparative category of esotericism, particularly, when the latter concept is taken out of its genealogical contexts as "Western" esotericism.

Daoist meditation, often rendered to Western tastes, has only quite recently become available in the West, compared to its Hindu and Buddhist counterparts. Daoist cultivation techniques appear to fit well to the secular assumptions of post-Christian and postmodern mentality as well as contemporary concerns with health and psychological well-being. To varying degrees, the related cultivation techniques such as meditation, calisthenics, massage, and sexual sublimation have been received as having practical psychological value and spiritual content. (Clarke 2000: 122–128.) Daoist cultivation undoubtedly appeals through its appreciation of overall health as a foundation for advanced practice.

Daoism is today acknowledged as one of the world's larger religious traditions. *Neidan* has a meaningful place within the later Daoist tradition as its dominant self-cultivation system.

¹ The Chinese terms are given characters and short descriptions in the terminology list, appendix, page 93.

Inquiries into *neidan* tradition, a fascinating phenomenon in itself, may yield insights concerning the development of alchemy in general, comparative views of "transformative practices" and "mysticism," "esotericism," and understanding Chinese religion, culture, and also some of its more modern manifestations, particularly *qigong*. As noted by Fabrizio Pregadio (see 2008: 551–554), *neidan* and *waidan* also represent an example of two traditions stemming of the same theoretical foundation (teachings of *Cantong qi*). And a study of the *study of neidan* may be considered an exercise into method and theory of religion, historiography, history and philosophy of humanities, an act of disciplinary analysis or self-reflection.

The modern academic study of Chinese alchemical literature began after the Daoist Canon (*Daozang*) was reprinted and made widely available in 1926. There is presently a fair amount of studies focusing on different aspects of *neidan* traditions in English, French, German, Japanese, and in Chinese. Some of the most relevant original texts of *neidan* have been translated to Western languages, mainly English, but a considerable part of the literature (comprising of hundreds of volumes of which approximately 150 is represented in the Ming dynasty Daoist Canon) remains untranslated. A serious research of the literary sources requires mastering literary Chinese, a set of skills I do not claim to possess. This thesis is therefore based on the analysis of research in English and French.

A historiographical, meta-theoretical, and discourse-oriented work such as this may at best serve to clarify, or explain some tensions on the field, to help gain overview of the different players, methodological and institutional approaches, and varying positions on the field. It may also serve to map out some of the field's achievements as well as its mismanagements, and contain in a reasonable amount of pages some basic information often spread out in various publications, and only rarely collected inside same covers.

Research interest and research questions. Indicated toward a textually oriented research, and the relevant first hand sources composed in Classical Chinese, my lack of linguistic competence in this area limits me to dealing with previous research, specifically to academic research literature in English and French. I will have to pass the research literature in Chinese and Japanese, and the same concerns the more scarce literature in Italian and German. At points I take advantage of, and lean on, earlier estimations and reviews.

Concerning the research interest of this thesis, I approach the question of *the state of the art in neidan studies*.² I attempt to address it through following subquestions of which three are primary and are answered more thoroughly in chapters 4 and 5: *How has neidan been constructed in the research? How can the research history be typologized? What areas of conflict or debate may be discerned, why do these conflicts appear?* Through these discussions some perspective will be gained to the following secondary questions: *What has been studied (history, person, lineage,*

² I use side by side the expression state of the field, which in my perspective addresses clearer what we are dealing with here.

practice, text, etc.) and what has been neglected? Have neidan studies responded appropriately to the postmodern critiques of humanities and social studies? To which direction should the research be directed in order to be fruitful?

To illustrate the field, I examine in some length particular questions within three main themes which seem to "emerge" as *issues of debate* out of reading the available studies, expectedly due to certain predilections: 1) *sexual alchemy*, 2) *female alchemy*, and 3) *early Quanzhen neidan*. These three themes represent in different ways the various borders of *neidan*. They do not represent the most typical forms of *neidan*, but instead, in different ways challenge the presumed prototype of *neidan*, which is often modeled along the lines of the Southern lineage and late imperial *neidan*. In this prototype presumption *neidan* would be nonsexual internal cultivation, ungendered, suitable for both men and women, or structured implicitly according to the male body and nature, and would include a focus on both physically oriented and contemplative practice.

My research interest is primarily descriptive, but also analytic and critical. By descriptive I mean that I try to comprehend and represent what is written by scholars from their particular academic standpoint, while trying to understand the phenomenon of *neidan*. With analytic I mean that I try to shed light on these different positions, research traditions, theoretical frameworks, knowledge interest and so forth. What is the relation of the approaches to possibly dissenting views? How do different ways of constructing the subject itself influence on results? By critical I mean that to some extent I attempt to "see through" or read the "subtext" of some of the claims by observing them in retrospective, as well as by taking advantage some of the critical apparatus developed in humanities and social studies during several last decades. I try to maintain a sensitivity to postcolonial critique, among other postmodern critical theories, as I find it a necessary precondition for estimating a field in which the final inquiry is made of a Chinese religious tradition. In the concluding chapter of this thesis, I attempt to distill wider insights from this discussion. The specialist discussion on *neidan* is extended through the comparative notion of "esotericism" to a broader discussion within the study of religion.

A central approach is plainly be the critical comparison and analysis of the scholarly work. In order to discern necessary differentiation in scholarly approaches and interpretations, an analytical set of concepts will be discussed in chapter 3. The approach is discourse-theoretically informed, but not strictly applied.

Structure of the thesis. In chapters 2 and 3 of this thesis I give attention to the theoretical and methodological foundations. I discuss several points of approach which in my view demand consideration in a study such as this. Based on this discussion, in chapter 3, I lay out a series of points of reference, an analytical set of evaluative concepts and questions through which the scholarly work is estimated. I also shortly present some aspects of epistemological self-reflection. In chapter 4, I first make some initial definitions concerning *neidan* studies, such as the most basic

terminological distinctions and discuss in what sense *neidan* is "Daoist." I then suggest a typology of approaches or phases in the study as four competitive "research programs" with associated scholarly works. This typology and overall discussion of research is supplemented with five representative constructions or descriptions of *neidan*. I do not aim to present any comprehensive mapping of the field (in the sense of a systematic review). In chapter 5, I look closer at three themes which have raised my attention through the reading of research papers and monographs. In this discussion I try to give some detail to the subject matter within *neidan* tradition as well as to analyze and differentiate the perspectives and positions of the scholars by taking advantage of the analytical frame presented in chapter 3. Scholars are occasionally extensively quoted. Chapter 6 is devoted to reflection. Based on the analysis in the previous chapters I suggest answers to the research questions, bring forth considerations emerging from this study and some future implications. I conclude with a short discussion on *neidan* in relation to the comparative category of esotericism.

2. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

2.1 Daoist studies and research of *neidan*

The modern academic field of Daoist studies recognizes Daoism as a religious tradition worthy of independent inquiry, and not only as reducible to the narrative of Chinese culture, history, and religion. (Komjathy 2007: 8).³ The academic research of Daoism—along with that of Chinese alchemical literature—began in the 1930s, after the Daoist canon (*Daozang*) was reprinted in Shanghai and made widely available in 1926. A significant marker in the study of Daoism, it brought into the scholarly view the historical scope and variety of the tradition. Japan and France were present in China through colonial interest, and the foundational work on the texts of *Daozang* were carried out by French and Japanese scholars, having early access to the wide literary collection containing around 1500 separate texts and commentaries—of these approximately 150 deal with *neidan*. In Western scholarship Henri Maspero (1883–1945) was the first to have recognition for the religious tradition as a whole, and not only for selected literary sources construed as the "authentic" sources of "Taoist philosophy." More collective effort to understand the tradition through its own sources began around 1950, when Paul Demiéville (1894–1979) published the posthumous work of Maspero. Only around 1970 the work of the early scholars started to arouse interest in other countries in Europe and the United States. In China the academic

³ This view can also be contrasted with the research interest where a specific religious tradition serves as a source of data for discussion concerning "religion." See J. Z. Smith *Imagining Religion* (1982).

research on Daoism was discouraged by the government until the 1980s. (Seidel 1990: 226; Kohn 2009: 226; Sivin 2010: 31; Pregadio 2019c: 4.)

A common feature in earlier studies had been to consider a large part of the historical tradition as superstitious deviance from the so-conceived original lofty philosophy of *Laozi* (*Daode jing*) and *Zhuangzi*. In the missionary-oriented and textual-centered readings of the early sinologists more than two thousand years of religious history was excluded from what was considered as "true" Taoism.⁴ The more recent English spelling "Daoism" stands, in addition to recognize the modern Chinese *pinyin* transcription, for making a distance to this more obviously colonial-minded, orientalist and exclusivist reading of what Daoism consists of. The general neglect of the Daoist literary sources was not due to material constraints only: it was primarily rooted in the ideological reasons shaped by Christian missionaries, and informed by the Qing dynasty Neo-Confucian literati (*ru*).

Today, replacing a recent dominant scholarly reading of Daoism as a religion beginning from the founding of the Celestial Masters (Tianshi) tradition in the later Han dynasty (25–220), specialist scholars now commonly perceive Daoism as a *continuous and multifaceted religious tradition*.⁵ With a large variety of expressions in practice and belief, it contains philosophical, religious, and liturgical aspects. According to this reading, despite the variety of forms and sub-traditions, a common feature has been the effort to align or unite with the Dao as a foundational and absolute principle, and despite the different ways of interpretation, most of the traditions have recognized the *Daode jing* as a foundational text for their tradition, though by no means the only one, a point demonstrated by the large amount of texts contained in the Daoist canon. This expresses an effort to understand the Daoist tradition more in terms of Daoists themselves, and their own criteria. Accordingly, a primary indication for Daoist identity would be self-identification, followed by an identification as such by the surrounding community. Moreover, the practices, views and beliefs should be recorded in the literary collections recognized by the tradition at large. A scholar should also refrain from taking just one Daoist formulation of Daoism as normative for the whole tradition and excluding others. (Kirkland 2004: 12–13.)⁶ Same should apply for *neidan* tradition in particular.

Among important pioneering contributors in the study of *neidan* writing in Western languages are Liu T'sun-yan (1917–2009), Catherine Despeux, Joseph Needham (1900–1995), Farzeen Baldrian-Hussein (1945–2009), Isabelle Robinet (1932–2000), and also Douglas Wile. Among later scholars are Monica Esposito (1962–2011), Fabrizio Pregadio, Elena Valussi, Stephen Eskildsen, Louis Komjathy, Liu Xun, and Paul Crowe. Several dissertations have been written by

⁴ The term "Taoism" (or "Taoïsme") was coined in 1839 by French scholars (Clarke 2002: 44). The construction of religious traditions, or the concept of world religion, is an issue that has been under severe scrutiny during the last two or three decades by discourse theoretical approaches.

⁵ See Sivin 2010: 31–32, Komjathy 2013: 3–10.

⁶ However, despite its benefits for delimiting sources and enabling clarity, such a conception of things Daoist tends to predefine, and it leans toward a conservative, traditionalist view, allowing not for much innovation.

researchers who sometimes have not been very active on the field after these works have been accomplished.⁷ These include Clarke Hudson, Lowell Skar, Paulino Belamide, Sara Neswald, and Wang Li. Ilia Mozias has most recently published his dissertation as book (2020). Emerging scholars with a few brilliant articles on *neidan* include Paul van Enckevort and Joshua Capitanio.

Common to Daoist studies in general, the scholarship on *neidan* has been conducted mainly in the sinological interpretive framework. This hegemonic discourse has largely dictated the approved ways of theoretical and methodological approach, and has emphasised the importance of Daoism for increasing knowledge and understanding of Chinese culture and history. Until the last two decades alternative interpretive approaches either had not been proposed or were at the initial stages of development. Perspectives of intellectual history, or comparative philosophy, usually ignored by the historians of Chinese Daoism, had also presupposed an antiquated description of Daoism as a "thought," or "philosophical Taoism." The range of approaches within Daoist studies—and studies on *neidan*—has since begun to include other theoretical and methodological approaches, such as anthropology, archaeology, comparative religion, cultural studies, intellectual history, material culture studies, philosophy, sociology, women's studies and so forth. (Komjathy 2007: 3–9.) This is particularly noteworthy in the dissertations increasingly since 1997.

2.2 Discourse and discursive study of religion

Discourse is a complex term widely applied in the scholarship today, and consequently, notoriously fuzzy and undefined. The simple everyday meaning of "discourse" refers to formal discussion, speech and a written study. Michel Foucault, central to discourse theory, writes in *Archaeology of knowledge* (1969): "Instead of gradually reducing the rather fluctuating meaning of the word 'discourse,' I believe I have in fact added to its meanings: treating it sometimes as the general domain of all statements, sometimes as individualizable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements" (trl. in Mills 1997: 6). Common to different scholarly perspectives on discourse is the *institutional* nature of discourse and its placement in *societal interaction*: dialogue is perceived as preliminary to discourse, and all speech and writing is social. Discourses differ according to the institutions and social practices through which they are formed. Similarly, discourse is influenced by the position of the speakers and the speech. Thus, the social context defines discourse, and discourse, in its part, influences if that social context is maintained. Discourse is also seen as organizing around practices of *exclusion*: the naturalness and self-evidence of things is thus built on what is excluded. Common perspective is

⁷ For a comprehensive bibliography of works published until 2009 on *neidan* and Chinese alchemy in general, see Pregadio (2009): *Chinese Alchemy - An Annotated Bibliography of Works in Western Languages*. Since 2009 many notable articles and monographs have been published. For a recent selection of publications on various themes within *neidan*, see Pregadio, "Chinese Alchemy [A Critical Bibliography]" (2019).

also, that meaning-making happens through discourse, accordingly discourse has always an effect in a social context. (Mills 1997: 9–14.) Olav Hammer writes succinctly: "Using the term discourse draws attention to the mechanisms of ideology and power that include and accept certain voices, while at the same time excluding others. It implies that certain propositions regarding the human condition and the constitution of reality, which are historically contingent and culturally constructed, are presented within the discourse as if they were natural, trans-historical facts and thus protected from scrutiny. The limits of discourse also define the boundaries of what may tolerably be questioned." (Hammer 2004: 29.)

I will here take discourse mainly to refer to the second way of usage pointed by Foucault, as referring to individualizable groups of statements, notably *discourse on neidan*. A loose definition is in place to apply the term somewhat consistently.⁸ *Discourses form by repeated and systematic statements, utterances, opinions; they found, establish, legitimate and maintain relatively stable systems of meaning, which also change and transform, and which are often connected to some institutional form.* (Taira 2016: 126; von Stuckrad 2013: 15–16.) This is *not* to say, that this thesis will follow a strict discursive method. Instead, discourse theory informs to some extent the general approach taken.

In study of religion, since the last decades of twentieth century several discourse theoretic positions have been taken. Discourse analysis has been a part of religious studies methodology latest from beginning of 1990s, and the basic thoughts of discursive study of religion were formulated in the 1980s. Discursive study of religion has been proposed as a resolution to the crises within religious studies, which concern its historical bonds with *theology*, its connection to *colonial agenda*, and its tendency to *essentialize religion*. A "discursive turn" in religious studies is partly related to the reflection, questioning, and discursive study of the term "religion" itself.⁹

Daoism is in this thesis conceived as a religious tradition, and *neidan* as a whole, is seen as a particular form (with variations) and distinct lineages of self-cultivation appearing mostly, but not only, within the larger Daoist context. I align my position with the anthropologist Talal Asad, that there "cannot be a universal definition of religion, not only because its constituent elements and relationships are historically specific, but because that definition is itself the historical product of discursive processes" (Asad 1993: 29). In other words, along a historicist stance, religion should *not* be viewed as a "trans-historical essence," existing as a timeless and unitary phenomenon. Not only do religions change over time, but also what people understand to be "religion," changes. (McGuire 2008: 5.) I subscribe to a moderate form of social constructionism denying a reified essence to "religion" in the sense of essentialism, and view "religion" as a concept that is

⁸ Following Foucault, Teemu Taira and Kocku von Stuckrad.

⁹ This shift in perspective has been heralded by discourse analytical research by Jonathan Z. Smith (*Imagining Religion*, 1982), Russell T. McCutcheon (*Manufacturing Religion*, 1997) ja Tomoko Masuzawa (*The Invention of World Religions*, 2005). Other important names concerning a discursive approach to religion include Bruce Lincoln, Timothy Fitzgerald, Talal Asad, Edward Said, David Chidester, and Daniel Dubuisson. A programmatic call for discourse-historical approach in the lines of Foucault has been called upon since 2003 by Kocku von Stuckrad, however this proposal is just one among several discursively oriented approaches, some of which are theories, some methods, some more general frameworks of research (Taira 2016: 126).

discursively contested. Within this thesis I will therefore not attempt and perceive no need for a universalizing definition for "religion," "Daoism" nor "*neidan*." However, I find it useful to apply these terms *contextually* as pointers to certain kinds of broad phenomena "out there." From the perspective taken in this thesis, it will also be useful to stay alert on the different ways the terms are employed.

Wouter Hanegraaff (2016: 156)¹⁰ writes that each *theoretical perspective* has its own way of creating or imaginatively *constructing its field of research*. They have different implications for what is highlighted as important and what is neglected as marginal. The very questions that are asked about the subject matter depend on prior theoretical interests and agendas. In other words, definitions are not separate from theories, and they are related to key objectives, theoretical assumptions and methodological heuristics of a certain research program (Asprem 2014: 6). Rarely, however, has enough theoretical and epistemological self-reflection been made.¹¹ Therefore, paying attention to how terms are used and defined, will help to identify and contextualize theoretical assumptions, methodological approaches, research interests of scholars, and therefore place them on the field of study and make sense of differences and conflicts in representation.

A "post-religionist" study of religion needs to respond to challenges posed by diverse fields such as cultural studies, postmodernism, post-structuralism and postcolonialism (Nye 2000: 449.)¹² Kocku von Stuckrad simplifies some of the challenges to study of religion as the "linguistic turn," "pragmatic turn," and the "debate on writing culture." The linguistic turn brought religion from the level of transcendent and otherworldly to the level of language and text. Pragmatic turn brought the attention in textual interpretation to the context and related practices in order to understand the text as well as possible. The debate on writing culture smashed the presumed objectivity of the researcher and re-situated the researcher's work as a part of the cultural process as constructing meanings and creating new narratives. (von Stuckrad 2003: 255.)¹³ Insights such as these, and the disciplinary demands that follow, concern humanities at large, and should be analogically applied in study of *neidan* as a religious endeavor.

Concerning discourse on *neidan*, it is useful to point at least two separate but intertwined levels. First, *the traditional (emic) neidan, or jindan, discourse* includes several voices and interpretations ("sub-discourses," or "narratives") on what *neidan* is. They differ according to the interpretation of the process, which may be conceived as physiological, sexual, more mental, non-

¹⁰ A historian of Western esotericism.

¹¹ Sociologist of religion Linda Woodhead (2011) makes a distinction on the *definition* and the *concept* of religion. Whereas a definition tends to be a neat verbal formulation singling out certain essential characteristics, a concept gains its meaning from the theoretical context it is embedded in. While a definition of religion in any universal sense can well be discarded, a conception of religion seems necessary in order to locate a field of research in the first place. (Woodhead 2011: 12.)

¹² Where is post-religionism? What is sometimes named "religionism" was the dominant approach and research orientation within religious studies, especially in the United States from 1960s to 1980s, and influenced largely by esoteric worldview, albeit implicitly. Typical of religionism is the wish to find a spiritual truth that will remain valid forever, regardless of time and circumstances, while claiming a "historical" approach. Religionism as a theoretical perspective is inspired not just by scholarly agendas but also by a search for spiritual meaning. It results in interpretations of religion that are themselves religious. (See Hanegraaff 2016.)

¹³ It should be noted that study of religion has faced more "turns" that we have space to deal with here.

dual, gendering, and so on. Traditional sub-discourses are historically and locally specific and are grounded in an "institutional" counterpart, mostly the narrative of lineage. The second level concerns *the academic (etic) discourse on "neidan"*. It draws on the traditional *neidan* discourse, and might in some cases contain a personal stake, as researchers may involve personally in *neidan* practice, or might subscribe knowingly or not, to a particular traditional understanding of *neidan*, due to special interest or influence. The institutional counterparts on this level would be the corresponding academic disciplines and "research programs" containing their particular disciplinary conventions.

Keeping the previously said in mind, we can apply Hanegraaff's words from another context to the field of *neidan* studies:

by being clear about the differences between these [...] approaches to what ... [*neidan*] ... is all about, we can learn to perceive the theoretical agendas and background assumptions that are operative in the scholarly literature, and this will help us understand why different scholars make different choices. (Hanegraaff 2016: 167.)

2.3 Western esotericism

Esotericism is a term coined within in the European nineteenth century occult milieu.¹⁴ It was adapted and established within the academic studies of western esotericism in the late twentieth century, as scholars came to realize that a large number of important historical currents, ideas, and practices were being marginalized in academic discourse, resulting in seriously flawed perceptions of Western cultural and religious history. "Esotericism" came to be used as a general label for all these forms of rejected knowledge. (Hanegraaff 2016: 166.) Hanegraaff separates five most important theoretical perspectives through which "esotericism" has been perceived and studied by modern scholars: religionism, sociology, secrecy, discourse, and history. Each has its own way of constructing "esotericism" as a field of research, and defining it. (Ibid: 156.) Therefore, behind the uses of the same term there is a range of dissimilar concepts, which can lead to *equivocation*, that is, false agreement or false disagreement. (Asprem 2014: 19.) "Esotericism" is as much a discursive construct as "religion" or "*neidan*," and it is hardly possible to pinpoint one definition to cover all its meanings. From a nominalist and historicist perspective the category esotericism can be understood as a pragmatic scholarly construct: it is ultimately just a name that scholars have decided to use for the purpose of placing certain historical currents, ideas, and practices apart for special investigation (Hanegraaff 2016: 166). It has been fairly conventional, following Antoine Faivre, to ground the scholarly discourse on western esotericism on a referential textual corpus

¹⁴ In a technical sense it was employed the first time in Jacques Matter's *Histoire critique du gnosticisme* in 1828, where it was concerned with "secret teachings" and "higher knowledge" (*gnosis*) (Asprem 2014: 10).

established in the Renaissance, and with this homological (genealogical) relation established, when correctly done, to refer to the "six characteristics of esotericism."¹⁵ However, this reference to the textual corpus as a core definition of esotericism has been lately rejected by many, if not most historians of western esotericism. In addition to historicist perspectives there have been also typological approaches to defining and studying esotericism, which include comparative and discursive orientations. (Asprem 2014: 12–18, 25–26.)

Hanegraaff has described the development of studies of esotericism in three distinct phases: first, from 1970s to 1990s within a "religionist" paradigm; second, a move away from religionism guided by Antoine Faivre favoring more empirical, historical and discursive approaches, with the field being institutionalized as "western esotericism"; and third indicated by increasing interdisciplinary debate across humanities and social sciences, particularly about the how boundaries of "esotericism" should be drawn. (Hanegraaff 2016: 168.) Concerning widening the field of study of esotericism and the comparative prospects of the term, *neidan* obviously cannot be genealogically linked to the historically specific phenomenon researched as "Western esotericism" to enable homological comparison, and therefore a strictly historicist definition of esotericism does not allow for a relation to *neidan*. However, approaching esotericism in terms of structural, analogical comparison (Asprem 2014), or as an "esoteric discourse" referring to "a secretive dialectic of concealment and revelation which is concerned with perfect knowledge" (von Stuckrad 2010: 67) may be relevant also in relation to *neidan*. I will finish this thesis by examining some of the comparative prospects.

2.4 Other resources of evaluation and critique

Scholarly approaches and positions. Olav Hammer (2004: xiv–xv)¹⁶ divides scholarly approaches toward religion from an outsider perspective into four categories: skeptic, theological, hermeneutical, and analytic. I will use these in observing *neidan* studies. The skeptical perspective focuses on truth claims and empirical validity with little interest for religion as a cultural phenomenon. Such a perspective may characterize the research program studying *neidan* sources in the context of history of scientific thought. A theological perspective estimates the tradition studied against one's own religious standing, and may be present particularly in religious studies approaches tied to theological departments, or in religionist approaches more generally. Hermeneutical perspective aims to reproduce faithfully the world-view of the ones studied, and is concerned with the "meaning of cultural elements, as ways of understanding and living in the world." This is clearly the dominating approach within *neidan* studies. Analytic perspective then,

¹⁵ The six characteristics of esotericism are famously: 1. correspondences and interdependence, 2. living nature, 3. imagination, 4. transmutation, 5. praxis of concordance, and 6. transmission. *Accès de l'ésotérisme occidental* (Faivre 1996).

¹⁶ A scholar of Western esotericism.

sees such a hermeneutical reconstruction as a foundation for further analysis which differentiates sharply between the emic and etic perspectives.¹⁷

In addition to these general approaches with their embedded interests for a type of knowledge, a vertical axis concerning relative involvement should be noted. While an outright skeptic agenda of debunking religion does not appear within *neidan* studies, the variation from close involvement to no involvement may be described as: scholar-practitioner (insider), sympathizer, neutral outsider, and critical outsider. In all of these, a reflective distance in scholarly context should be expected. The scholar-practitioner perspective in Daoist studies, is problematized interestingly in Palmer & Siegler 2017, in the case of Louis Komjathy. Characterized by close involvement and first-person experience as an insider, it may run the risk of "going native," losing a reflective scholarly perspective. In *neidan* studies, sympathizer position is common with a keen interest in things Daoist without strict adherence, along with a neutral outsider position.

Postmodern critique. The issues raised by postmodern critical theories, and possible response to them, should be taken into account as a means of estimating the approaches to the study of *neidan*. I will particularly address postcolonial theory, feminist theory, and critique on essentialism (which is expressed famously by Eliadean religionism). All these perspectives draw to significant extent from "postmodern(ist)" or "post-structuralist" thought of Michel Foucault, as well as Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes, Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Lacan, Jean Baudrillard, and Jean-François Lyotard. (Strenski 2015: 157–169; Leezenberg & de Vries 2018: 293–317.)

Postcolonial theory is landmarked by works such as Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1977). Postcolonial critique aims to reveal the imbalanced power relations created through colonial practices and discourses. In these discourses the modern, civilized, rational, and scientific identity of the "West" was constructed against the colonial "other," the "East." As the colonial project involved not only political and economical power, but operated centrally on the level of culture, knowledge, and discourse, the structures of oppression arguably remain ingrained. Colonial agenda has been central to the formative phase of the humanities. Sensitivity to postcolonial critique would encourage moving beyond solely western frameworks and concerns, especially Western academic accounts on Daoism—accounts which this thesis is concerned with. It would give attention to indigenous Chinese and Daoist views, in other words, it would empower committed Daoists and representatives of *neidan* practice to speak for their own traditions and their priorities. But instead of giving sole priority to them, it would also try to avoid *any* ethnocentric or lineage-centered bias. Also such that prioritizes east, or China. It would avoid ethnocentrism both in terms of eurocentrism or, in this case, sinocentrism. Postcolonial sensitivity would alarm on the modern and

¹⁷ As Hammer writes: "Commonly associated with the hermeneutical approach is the concept of *epoche*, the bracketing of questions of truth or falsehood. Religious questions are characterized as meta-empirical and are therefore largely insulated from critique. The analytic perspective on the contrary notes that the documented doctrines and rituals of the worlds [sic] religions vary in all respects and are thus entirely dependent on social and historical context. Their claims are human constructions, and it is therefore relevant to ask how, by whom and for what purposes these claims are produced, legitimized, disseminated and reproduced." (Hammer 2004: xiv–xv.)

colonial-minded bias within the academic discourse, its theories and methodologies. (Komjathy 2013: 13–15; Said 2011; Strenski 2015: 216–239; Leezenberg & de Vries: 336–353.)

Feminist theory aims to expose the imbalanced power structures related to issues of gender construction implicit in societies, and their historical representations. Recognition of the issue of gender—if not the full-scale application of the feminist agenda—calls for attention to the role of women, their positions, their representation in *neidan* tradition, its history, practice, and theory, driven by the hermeneutic of suspicion, with a focus on spotting gender inequality. It would locate the patriarchal structures of oppression in discourse and practice, and deconstruct them as visible. A gender sensitive approach would attend on these issues in scholarly narrative. It would pay particular attention, for example, to gender differences in approaching a spiritual path: especially the notable role of physicality, food, and body substances (blood and milk) in the representations of female spiritual aspirations. Critical feminist perspective would draw attention to gender and role (or absence) of women in the institutions and lineages which have maintained *neidan*, and written about it. It would question the ways of patriarchal misrepresentation of the tradition. It would also find how historical women have managed agency in the lived religiosity despite oppressive structures. (Valussi 2003: 55–68; Jantzen 1995: 1–25; Neswald 2007; Strenski 2015: 189–213; Leezenberg & de Vries 2018: 317–333.)

Constructionist critique of essentialism within study of religion is pinned down notably by Russell McCutcheon's *Manufacturing religion*.¹⁸ An essentialist perspective, as opposed to a social constructionist one, presupposes a timeless ahistorical essence which only manifests through historically perceived forms. As an epistemological position essentialism may be expressed in relation to any subject matter, like "*neidan*." Within study of religion, its recent form is termed religionism.¹⁹ Religionism commonly dresses in the guise of "history," and is found on an implicit religious (often esotericist) presumptions, and agenda. Today rejected among historicist researchers, it was especially in the North America a dominant approach to religious studies from 1960s to 1980s, represented famously by Mircea Eliade (1907–1986). Within a neutral historicist methodology²⁰ without religious agenda, albeit then involved with a naturalist epistemology, one should remain alert for essentialist undertones in scholarship. (McCutcheon 1997; Hanegraaff 2016: 156–159; King 1999: 161–175.)

Paradigm, research program. I will draw on ideas concerning scientific paradigms as disciplinary matrices (Thomas Kuhn, 1962), and competing research programmes (Imre Lakatos, 1978). Presuming that humanities and social sciences could be accepted as sciences in the first place, these perspectives may help to estimate the relative "development," of *neidan* studies today. Kuhn

¹⁸ Particularly, religion as a *sui generis* category.

¹⁹ Within studies of mysticism, the essentialist position is coined as "perennialism," referring to "perennial philosophy".

²⁰ See Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy* (2012) for an impressive exposition and historical genealogy of a historicist perspective within study of esotericism.

viewed that periods of normal science,²¹ with stable, cumulative growth of knowledge through paradigm-based research, are followed by periods of radical shift of the hegemonic paradigm. In Kuhn's terminology paradigm refers firstly to a "disciplinary matrix," a constellation of rather conservative (partially un verbalized) *disciplinary commitments* regarding a research approach, involving key theories, instruments, values, and metaphysical assumptions. The term also refers to shared exemplary models of research. A paradigm governs, according to Kuhn, in the first instance *a social group of practitioners*, instead of a subject matter, and such scientific communities can be small in scale. Lakatos suggested that the history of scientific thought consists rather of competing research programs, similar to Kuhn's pre-paradigmatic phases, a situation where several "sequences of theory" may exist side by side while one of them holds the hegemonic position. While I would rely here more on Kuhn, the view on competing research programs, in contrast to the idea of a complete hegemony of one paradigm, is worthwhile maintaining.²² Kuhn's "incommensurability" refers interestingly to difficulty comparing theories deriving from different paradigms, as they have no common measure. (Kuhn 1970; 174–210; Lakatos 1978; Bird 2018; Musgrave & Pigden 2016; Leezenberg & de Vries 2018: 114–129.)

3. A WORD ON METHODOLOGY

3.1 Review, comparison, and analysis

For the collection of data specific methods were not required, apart from acquiring books and articles for several years, necessary for a hopefully balanced estimation of the field. Methodologically most meaningful have been the ways and practices of analyzing with sufficient clarity the wide textual body, in practice, a considerable bulk of monographs, translations, bibliographies, research articles, and reviews. Initially the scope of materials dealt with covers *everything published* on the field in Western languages until today.²³ This is the level of inquiry in chapter 4. In chapter 5, then, the discussion will be limited according to the three thematic areas chosen according to their illustrative value, historical scope, coverage of scholars and approaches on the field, and of course, the potential juiciness of the subject matter. First I have tried to understand what scholars have tried to say, keeping these statements and positions sufficiently in

²¹ Described by Karl Popper's dominant perspective of development of science.

²² A research programme refers to a sequence of theories formed by a hard core theory and supported by auxiliary theories, and termed to be in a healthy state when progressive both theoretically (predicts unexpected facts) and empirically (predictions are being verified). Lakatos' replaces Kuhn's socio-psychological description of scientific change with a logico-methodological one, thus speaking on a partly different level than Kuhn.

²³ It has not been possible to include all these studies in the bibliography, which was my original intention.

my memory and mindset.²⁴ Organization of the data has been essential, enabling constant review when necessary. Awareness of almost certain misreading and forgetting, and realizing my lack of theoretical sophistication has haunted me, at times paralyzed me, but not for good. The method in this thesis consists plainly of wide, systematic and thorough, sometimes cursory, reading, review, comparison and critical analysis through a set of conceptual tools constructed on the basis of the previous theoretical discussion. This analytical frame is applied more thoroughly in chapter 5, in which I have highlighted three chosen debates on the field. I estimate why conflicts appear and why conclusions differ, and, through these particular case examples, illustrate some of the more general movements on the field.

Apart from demanding reflexivity in relation to my own work, attention to levels of reflexivity and positioning is helpful also for the purposes of viewing the less explicit layers, "subtexts," of studies and publications (Fingerroos 2003). *Self-reflection* concerns explicating, defining and reflecting on the personal attachments and affiliations. Here one may particularly note the scholar-practitioner position. *Methodological reflection* points to definition and explication of the methods, theories, and concepts. This is the most explicit part of research, and demands naturally the most attention to details. *Epistemological reflection* refers to the definition and explication of theory of knowledge and knowledge interest underlying the theoretical framework. *Reflection on the affiliations* of the research means defining and explicating the outer, political and power-related affiliations and relations. (Fingerroos 2003: 1–12.) Are these layers explicated in the research or not?

Questions on these levels help to structure differentiation in the foundations of the theory of knowledge and knowledge interest, approaches or research traditions, particular theories, concepts and their definitions, methodological solutions, results and conclusions. These factors lead to difference in interpretation and reading more generally. Also, as I intend to observe some debates within the field, I will have to consider the question of *equivocation*: scholars might use the same terms, but refer to another concept, or a concept is differently contextualized due to a difference in positioning and research interest. Thus researchers may agree or disagree about certain issues, but these agreements and disagreements may not be correctly placed if they have misunderstood what the other is saying and in what context. (Asprem 2014: 18.)²⁵ Based on various points made earlier, I have attempted to identify and be mindful of following aspects when close-reading and reviewing research. I have attuned these categories to fit the case of *neidan* studies to the best of my knowledge.

²⁴ I have also tried to understand what it is that scholars are trying to understand and speak *about*.

²⁵ This can be explained also through Kuhn's concept of "incommensurability," particularly methodological and semantic incommensurability, wherein representations and verbalization stemming from different research paradigms (or programmes) do not meet.

- 1) *Epistemology*: realist — relativist. Is *neidan* thought as "real," something "out there," or is it thought as a word capturing various things according to its definition?
- 2) *Research approach*: skeptic, theological, hermeneutic, analytic. Does a scholar want to represent the tradition in order to understand cultural and religious meanings? Is analysis and explanation attempted? Is there an attempt to reveal oppressive power relations? Is there hidden confessionalism or value-laden perspectives involved? Any positivist or scientific air?
- 3) *Subject matter*. What is the explicated subject, or separate themes of the study?
- 4) *Data*. What data is used? Is it only textual sources, what kind? Does the data also include participant observation or first-person perspective, images, artifacts, or interview? Is the study source-critical?
- 5) *Research tradition and discipline*. Does the researcher represent and emerge mainly out of sinology, history, sociology, history of science, literary studies, history of ideas, or religious studies as a research tradition? Is the approach multidisciplinary?
- 6) *Involvement, position*: scholar-practitioner, sympathizer, neutral outsider, critical outsider. Does the scholar express critical attitude, or maintain neutral and sympathetic? Does the scholar explicate a committed practitioner position? Does the scholar not explicate her presumed practitioner position?
- 7) *Theoretical background*. What theoretical framework is used if explicated? What theoretical background does the scholar emerge from?
- 8) *Main concepts*. What are the main concepts? Are they defined, how?
- 9) *Conception of neidan*. How is *neidan* constructed?
- 10) *Attachments*. What is the institutional situatedness, any funding institutions?
- 11) *Results*. What are the direct results from the analysis of the data?
- 12) *Conclusions and theories advanced*. What is said on the basis of the immediate results? How far does the scholar go from the sources? What is the level of speculation?
- 13) *Reflexivity*. Does the researcher practice reflexivity? What is the level of explication? What is left unsaid, why?

This analytic framework is applied particularly with regard to the themes which have cumulated some debate within the field. It helps to explain some of the differences in scholarly perspective. As such it is an exercise within the more general history and philosophy of humanities and historiography of *neidan* studies. Through comparison and situating the research on the field a clearer picture is made of the differences and similarities as well as possible developments in the particular thematic area concerning *neidan*. Has the research on this particular subject given us a steadily more nuanced understanding of the subject matter? Has there been phases, "paradigm changes," shifts in the overall angle of research, or changes in the hegemonic position of research programmes? By chance, something may be learned of *neidan* as well.

3.2 Epistemological reflection and research position

Epistemologically my own position leans toward a view on constructive formation of the social reality (see Berger & Luckmann 1965) through discursive practices and discourses. This refers to a constructionist—and moderate relativist—position which considers the social world as discursively constructed and upheld through social structures and conditioning. I remain doubtful about a more strict position of social construction of *reality* (instead of construction of *social reality*), which considers all conceptions of reality as socially constructed.

Jürgen Habermas (1974) separates three knowledge interests: technical (related to empirical-analytical sciences), practical (related to historical-hermeneutic sciences), and emancipatory (related to critically orientating sciences). (Fingerroos 2003: 1–20; Bohman & Rehg 2014.).²⁶ On these terms my analysis deals with practical knowledge interest by trying to understand and represent, but also emancipatory knowledge interest, as I try to, at times, “see through” researchers’ claims and arguments enabled by hindsight, explication and reading the subtext. It would also correspond to Hammer’s definition of “analytic” perspective, discussed earlier in the subchapter 2.4. However, generally I attempt to stick to the guideline of not going too far from text to unsubstantiated speculation.

The sociologist Pierre Bourdieu reflected critically on the socially privileged position of scholarly knowledge (Bourdieu 1998: 193–208), a point which calls for self-reflection concerning any scholarly representation or redescription. Elsewhere he notes that *scientific field is a social world* as any other. Scientific activity is social activity, and scientific construction is social construction of reality. Thus, it is to do with power, capital, power relations, struggle to maintain these relations or to change them, strategies of maintaining and subverting, interests, and so forth. (Ibid: 82.) Through its own *discourses* scientific activity constructs and makes contributions to the social world. This means that knowledge produced by the researcher does not stand in vacuum, and is not irrelevant, but it is also *political* and *ethical*. Also, scholarly knowledge is involved in social struggle within scholarly communities: knowledge is constructed within the interaction of particular scientific social fields and in certain conditions, and published scholarship reflects such struggles.

Although a scholar may be in a distanced and observant position, this does not mean that she would be privileged to “know better” than those whose religious activities are inquired. Scholarly etic discourse should be seen as another narrative in a larger web of discourse, where the different emic positions give various other views, a point made clear in the “writing culture” debates. (see Clifford & Marcus 1986; von Stuckrad 2003: 255.) Here I should give a moment to reflect on the insider–outsider question, and on my own entanglements on the subject. Although

²⁶ Ilkka Niiniluoto adds a theoretical knowledge interest, related to explanative theories

many of the traditions of *neidan* appear to me as strange, and somewhat distant historically as well as culturally, I should note that I have a personal relation to certain practices and approaches which claim a connection to Daoist cultivation, and also *neidan*. This is mainly through practices identified as *qigong*, *taiji*, and Healing Tao, associated to Mantak Chia. However, I am not committed to any particular Daoist lineage, and am not formally affiliated. My position would liken to a sympathizer or popular practitioner, and approach the category of a scholar-practitioner.

4. NOTIONS ON THE STATE OF THE FIELD

4.1 Initial definitions and a discussion of boundaries

Relevant terms and meanings for "internal alchemy." From a meta-theoretical perspective the academic term "internal alchemy" is a *construct* for academic research, an originally traditional emic term taken to serve etic purposes. I view it justified to speak of a field of study, using "internal alchemy" or "*neidan*" as a convenient *tool*, rather than trying to imagine it as something essentially real, something with a substance of its own (see McCutcheon 1997). It points to a field which is not easily defined, structured or captured. Therefore, I presume one should not look for any *one* idealized sense of construction of internal alchemy, but rather be open to see in a nuanced way the *variant ways of constructing* it in the academic discourse on one hand, and in the *neidan* discourse on the other hand. Of particular interest are the ways traditional, exclusivist conceptions of *neidan* are carried into academic discourse, reflecting some of the discursive practices present already in the traditional *neidan* discourse.

To give initial description of terms, according to the *Daoism Handbook* article "Inner Alchemy" (2000) by Fabrizio Pregadio & Lowell Skar, *neidan* 內丹 (internal elixir, or internal alchemy), generally refers to a range of esoteric doctrines and practices that adepts use to transcend the individual and cosmological states of being. More specifically, the term *neidan*, and its synonym *jindan* 金丹 (golden elixir),²⁷ refer to three related levels: 1) a coherent body of oral and written *teachings*; 2) regimens of *practices* related to these teachings; 3) an *inner state* realized through these practices. (Pregadio & Skar 2000: 464, 481.) Chinese bibliographers and modern historians of Daoism commonly use the term *neidan* in contrast with *waidan* 外丹 (external elixir, or external alchemy). *Waidan* refers to Chinese form of laboratory alchemy, *neidan* designates a later discipline that appears within Daoist tradition from the eighth century on (Tang dynasty, 618–

²⁷ Historical authors of alchemical texts themselves often call their tradition *jindan zhi dao* 金丹之道 (the Way of the Golden Elixir) (Pregadio 2008b: 551), a term which in these writings can refer either to external or internal alchemy, or both at the same time.

907). (Robinet 2011: 75–76.) Scholarly usage of the terms *neidan* and *waidan* is generally accepted, but their meanings have fluctuated in Chinese history.²⁸

In Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1644–1911) dynasty developments of later imperial times a few other distinctions become relevant. *Qingxiu* 情修 (pure cultivation or solo cultivation) became distanced increasingly from *shuangxiu* 雙修 (paired practice, or dual cultivation; term refers to sexual cultivation), as especially the Quanzhen-related solo practitioners tried to separate their practice from the often moralized duo practitioners, whose practices became a “relatively popular” form of *neidan* practice in the Ming.²⁹ Also, during the Qing, a textual body of gendered *neidan* to female practitioners emerged. This was labelled *nüdan* 女丹, female alchemy, and since this development, “*neidan*” came historically to mark a practice for men, as the separate term *nüdan* was reserved for women. In this work, however, the term *neidan* is used in a gender-neutral way, and it is generally taken to include *nüdan*, when *nüdan* is not specifically addressed.

In what sense is it reasonable to call neidan Daoist? While there is a quiet agreement among researchers on *neidan* as centrally Daoist, not all seem to accept this as a given.³⁰ This may relate partly to how the plurality of traditions, labelled Daoist, is constructed. Like so many other “great religious traditions” discovered by Europeans during the few previous centuries, “Daoism,” or “Taoism,” as an image in the learned western imagination, was a construction of the nineteenth century scholars,³¹ who also coined the term 1839 in France (as *Taoïsme*) (Clarke 2000: 44). In the dynastic histories of China the phenomena labelled now as Daoism were referred to mainly with generic terms such as *daojia* (family, or lineage, of the way), *daojiao* (teachings of the way), and also *daoshu* (arts of the way) (Miller 2005: 16–35). Whereas *daoshu* serves a pointer to several kinds of related practices, in the Daoist texts the meanings of *daojia* and *daojiao* are used interchangeably, and defining the same entity, as arguably there is no teaching (*daojiao*) without a lineage (*daojia*), which serves to maintain it. (Sivin 2010: 31–33; Komjathy 2013: 17; Pregadio 2017: 1–2; Skar 2003: 121–126).

As noted, the majority of the specialists in Daoist studies³² in the modern west now accept a view on Daoist tradition not as a single historical unity, nor two separate entities called

²⁸ These changing contours have been traced particularly by Farzeen Baldrian-Hussein: “Inner Alchemy: Notes on the Origin and Use of the Term Neidan” (1989); and Isabelle Robinet: “On the Meaning of Terms Waidan and Neidan” (2011).

²⁹ Another term (perhaps pejorative) for sexual practices in the *neidan* context is *guidan* 閨丹, female elixir. Clarke Hudson (2007) mentions the term *yindan* 陰丹 (“sexual alchemy”).

³⁰ Most explicitly Skar (2003).

³¹ Construction of the “essence” of the religion, and the sense of a unified historical tradition. However, in the Western minds the unity was divided into “philosophical Taoism” and “religious Taoism,” the seeming contradiction between these was puzzling the minds of twentieth century scholars. On the construction of religious traditions, see King 1999, Masuzawa 2005.

³² The case is still somewhat different in the broader disciplines of sinology or religious studies

”philosophical and religious Taoism,”³³ but a loosely knit group of developing historical traditions, centering around certain recurring basic ideas,³⁴ most importantly the Dao as the underlying structure of the universe and the aim of religious endeavour.³⁵ These scholars are willing to embrace the multiplicity of expressions from the Daoist thought to its liturgical aspects, as long as these are rooted in the literary and known historical heritage, such as the *Daozang*, and its accompanying collections. They attempt to approach Daoism more through the tradition itself, that is, through trying to understand how practicing Daoists through different times have understood their own tradition. They perceive Daoism as a diverse, but, at the same time, continuous religious tradition. (Kirkland 2004: 1–19; Sivin 2010: 31–33; Komjathy 2013: 3–16.)³⁶

Neidan traditions are distinguished along other features by their synthesis of sources.³⁷ According to Isabelle Robinet, the ability perform creative synthesis, which carries on some aspects of the larger tradition in a new kind of vital format, is a feature of Daoist traditions in general, and they embraced this tendency (Robinet 2008: 20–23). Robinet describes *neidan* as thoroughly influenced by Buddhism (especially *chan*), and a completely Chinese and Daoist reaction to it, simultaneously more intellectual than previous forms of Daoism, but pragmatic in a sense that Buddhism was not. In Robinet’s description *neidan* was able to integrate Buddhism as well as Confucianism into its Daoist main current in a reflective, organized and coherent manner. (Robinet 1989: 297–302.)

Early *neidan* adepts practiced the art with the help of a master or followed the instructions of certain texts, they did not belong to any particular group of Daoists.³⁸ This individual, esoteric and mostly eremitic tradition changed later with the establishment of the Quanzhen (Complete perfection) order, which utilized *neidan* as a part of its cultivation repertoire. (Baldrian-Hussein 2008: 764.) Throughout centuries, *neidan* persistently continued to arouse interest also in the intellectual elite, and although *neidan* was adopted centrally by the Daoist lineages, it continued to flourish among lay practitioners as well. (see Xun Liu 2009: 35–37; Skar 2003.) Since the Song

³³ “It has become a sinological dogma to distinguish between the so-called Taoist school (Daojia), said to have produced the classical mystical texts ..., and the so-called Taoist religion (Daojiao), often said to have begun in the Later Han period [i.e., the 1st–2nd centuries CE]. The successive Daozang [Daoist Canons] never made this distinction. When we look at the way the terms Daojia and Daojiao occur in the texts preserved in the Ming Canon [published in 1445], we see that they are practically synonymous and interchangeable.” (Schipper and Verellen 2004: 6.)

³⁴ A suggestion for such common features that would serve to identify a Daoist community of practice is made by Gil Raz (2012). These are 1) a view of the Dao as an overarching and effective force; 2) that can be approached by humans through ritual means (towards achieving transcendence); 3) that are, in turn, protected through strict transmission lineages; 4) and replace sacrificial means of communication with typically bureaucratic ones; 5) in a quest for transcendence that incorporates an eschatological vision (to differentiate from earlier traditions of longevity seekers). Such “polythetic” definition of Daoism is inherently dynamic, and lacks orthodoxy or orthopraxy. It leaves room for variation in the criteria, and doesn’t require all of them to be met in order to define a group as Daoist. (Steavu 2013: 995.)

³⁵ For recent overall presentations of Daoist tradition, see Komjathy 2013; Pregadio 2008; Kirkland 2004. There are also others.

³⁶ The interpretive perspective within Daoist studies at the end of twentieth century consciously repudiated the orientalist legacies and insisted on: 1) recognizing Daoism as primarily Chinese; 2) privileging the factual data of Daoism itself in social, historical and textual terms; and 3) acknowledging the importance of living forms of Daoism within the Chinese communities. (Kirkland 2004.)

³⁷ These sources are viewed in detail by Isabelle Robinet in “Original Contributions of *Neidan* to Taoism and Chinese Thought” (1989).

³⁸ Without unifying central authority various local interpretations could share a common doctrinal foundation, and adepts could relate themselves with the ideas and practices of other traditions while retaining the emphasis of their own teachers. (Pregadio & Skar 2000: 481.)

dynasty (960–1279) *neidan* was integrated as the dominant system of self-cultivation in most Daoist schools replacing earlier formulations of Daoist self-cultivation (Baldrian-Hussein 2008: 764; Kohn 2009: 1.) When Daoism is taken in the strict sense referring to a sociologically definable lineage-based group, like the Tianshi (Celestial masters) or Quanzhen Daoists as an eremitic and later monastic tradition, it is possible to argue that *neidan* became “Daoist” only when it was adopted by the established Daoist schools. And one may argue, like Lowell Skar, that the first *neidan* author explicitly to claim Daoist identity was Chen Nan (d.1213), as he combined the practice of “contemplative alchemy into the teachings of Daoist priests” (Skar 2003: 188–189).

However, if we take a more open approach, Joshua Capitanio puts the issue somewhat neatly: “...since *neidan* theory and practice were incorporated into mainstream Daoist ritual practices, played an important role in the development of the Daoist monastic order of Quanzhen 全真 (Complete Perfection), and are primarily known through the large body of texts included within the Daoist canon of the Zhengtong era (*Zhengtong Daozang* 正統道藏), it has become customary to characterize *neidan* as ‘Daoist’” (Capitanio 2015: 122–123). Thus, calling *neidan* “Daoist” despite the wide array of influences it incorporates—which could also be read as contrary—seems to be in first place, a matter of *convention*.

4.2 Four research programs (and five descriptions of *neidan*)

To structure the field in phases and to locate studies and researchers that will be later examined in more detail, I’ll suggest a tentative typology as “research programs.” My discussion focuses on the works in western languages, and will therefore leave out studies in Japanese and Chinese. However, it should be clearly noted that the studies in the latter languages and research traditions play an important role in understanding *neidan*, and should be considered for a more balanced judgement. I’ll assume no greater force of accuracy for this typology, at best it may be taken as a heuristic device. At worst, it will have an inaccurate correspondence to a commonly perceived state of affairs. I will also impose a certain “narrative of process” within *neidan* studies.

What comes clear here, to generalize, is that the earlier scholars on the field have been dealing with a fairly unstructured mass of sources and with few secondary sources. First they have taken their approach through some point of entry and through a particular scholarly tradition. They have formulated what should perhaps be called initial suggestions for the representation of *neidan*, often relying on a particular *neidan* author, a corpus of texts, or texts of a specific historical period. Later scholars have had the opportunity, according to their interest and resources, to review a wider scale of secondary sources, and to gain larger view of the historical scale of *neidan*, including Qing and the post-imperial era. So as the field has progressed—as I imagine it to be—the definition and description of *neidan* has become increasingly nuanced. The researchers closer to our day as a rule

tend to regard *neidan* as a multi-faceted tradition of approaches toward "transcendence," however defined. Perhaps one may say, that the conception of *neidan* has changed, or developed, also according to need, as the field has progressed.³⁹

In the following, after characterizing each of the four research programs with associated scholars and studies, a section will be dedicated for *representative descriptions of neidan*. My intention is, by giving a variety of descriptions, to illustrate the scholarly positions taken in the field—and through it some perspectives on *neidan*. By highlighting just these representations, my point is *not* to show the most exemplary or correct perspectives, but rather to try to demonstrate some of the variety of positions taken in the field. I suggest that these representative approaches should contain the main positions taken within the research in western languages. Other perspectives move somewhere in-between or take combinations of them.⁴⁰ Apart from these representative "type examples," all researchers have their own perspective, which may follow strictly the leads of earlier scholarly work or may contain some more innovative traits.

(1) *Study of neidan materials in the context of the history of scientific thought* : focuses on research of Chinese alchemical sources, including *neidan*, as a neglected part of history of scientific thought. An early phase of Western academic study of *neidan* materials was conducted by scholars dealing with the history of chemistry and science in general, showing a particular interest in the development of alchemy in China along with a strong tendency for cross-cultural comparison. Relevant articles and works include those of Tenney L. Davis et al., and the work of Joseph Needham & Lu Gwei-Djen. Davis collaborated with Chinese translators and specialists, similar to Needham.

The detailed *neidan*-related publications by the organic chemist Tenney L. Davis (1890–1949)⁴¹ with his students and Chinese collaborators, Lu-Chiang Wu, Chao Yün-ts'ung, and Chen Guofu, contain pioneering translations and studies on works such as the *Cantong qi*,⁴² traditionally attributed to Wei Boyang, *Wuzhen pian*, and *Jindan sibaizi*, traditionally attributed to Zhang Boduan. The work of Davis et al. should be regarded as the first serious attempt to comprehend *neidan* materials. In these works (approximately 1930–1940) the development of alchemy in China was viewed in comparison to the later development of alchemy in the Middle-East and Europe.

³⁹ While in this section I will discuss *neidan* constructs mainly through the examples of the explicitly written compact descriptions or definitions, I take these as representative of the whole approach, or particular works, of scholars, which I try to consider to the best of my ability. Although the focus here is on these descriptions, they are thus not the only source of my discussion.

⁴⁰ Instead of making up abstract generic categories, which would try to cover all taken approaches, I choose to pick out a few representative actual formulations, which may or may not be similar to others.

⁴¹ Articles of Tenney L. Davis et al. on *neidan* materials include: "An Ancient Chinese Treatise on Alchemy Entitled Ts'an T'ung Ch'i." (1932); "Chang Po-Tuan of T'ien-Tai, His Wu Chên Pien, Essay on the Understanding of the Truth: A Contribution to the Study of Chinese Alchemy" (1938); "Pictorial Representations of Alchemical Theory" (1938); "An Alchemical Poem by Kao Hsiang-Hsien" (1939); "A Fifteenth Century Chinese Encyclopedia of Alchemy" (1940); "Four Hundred Word Chin Tan of Chang Po-Tuan" (1940); "The Secret Papers in the Jade Box of Ch'Ing-Hua" (1940); "Shih Hsing-Lin, Disciple of Chang Po-Tuan and Hsieh Tao-Kuang [sic], Disciple of Shih Hsing-Lin" (1940); "Three Alchemical Poems by Chang Po-Tuan" (1940); "Shang-Yang Tzu, Taoist Writer and Commentator on Alchemy." (1942);

⁴² *Cantong qi* (The Seal of the Unity of the Three); *Wuzhen pian* (Chapters on Awakening to Reality); *Jindan sibaizi* (Four Hundred Characters on the Golden Elixir); see terminology list in the appendix for characters and short descriptions.

Alchemy, based on a *rational idea* of uniting opposite principles, was perceived as stemming from a single source, China, referring to structural similarities of ideas in different parts of the world. The Chinese literary sources were considered the oldest extant ones, the main reference being the *Cantong qi*.⁴³ A large part of this early work constituted of recognizing works on alchemy from the Chinese sources, particularly the *Daozang*. There is some ambiguity on whether Davis et al. recognized the internal nature of the cultivation processes the *neidan* texts involved, particularly those of Zhang Boduan and Chen Zhixu (see for example Davis et al. 1938: 85).⁴⁴ Apart from the *Cantong qi*, with little reference to actual practice, and traditionally interpreted mostly as a source of *neidan* theory, also Zhang Boduan's *Wuzhen pian* was viewed in the context of theoretical alchemy (Davis et al. 1938b: 97).⁴⁵ While recognizing some merits in alchemical principle, and practical findings, Davis et al. found it necessary to positivistically state the endeavour was unsuccessful (as science) in the end.⁴⁶

Joseph Needham (1900–1995) & Lu Gwei-Djen's (1904–1991) treatment of *neidan* or "physiological alchemy" as "proto-biochemistry" in the development scheme of scientific ideas⁴⁷ is a pioneering and large sweeping attempt to an overview of the tradition. Needham & Lu's 1983 work appeared as one volume within Needham's giant labour, but it is detailed and innovative. In retrospective, their approach strikes the reader with suggestive generalizations and cross-cultural comparisons, ones that a later specialist would hardly imagine to make. The grand narrative of universal and continuous development of scientific thought is bound to seem suspicious in the view of postmodern reading. Counterpart to laboratory alchemy, *neidan* is considered essentially materialist in character as it aims to form the elixir ("enchyoma") of immortality from substances and *qi* ("juices and *pneumata*") of the body, a process which may be considered "psychosomatic perhaps but certainly not psychological alone" (Needham & Lu 1983: xxviii), unlike the so-imagined mystical alchemy of the West.⁴⁸ Needham & Lu explicitly interpret the elixir of *neidan* as "a physiological (indeed at bottom a biochemical) elixir, to be prepared by physiological, not

⁴³ The traditional dating of *Cantong qi* has later been proven incorrect. The oldest known alchemical literary sources are now the *Taiqing* corpus, also preserved in the *Daozang* (see Pregadio 2006b); the *Cantong qi* in its present form seems to date earliest to approximately year 450, or possibly a couple of hundred years later (Pregadio 2011: 11–27).

⁴⁴ At times it seems they were aware or at least suspecting it, but that quality was not quite explicitly stated. But reading through their articles, the conclusion of Needham, that they conceived these works in the context of "practical laboratory alchemy," seems an oversimplification (Needham et al. 1983: 91). This is echoed by Skar: "Tenney L. Davis, and several of his Chinese students, translate texts in the Golden Elixir tradition from the tenth to sixteenth centuries, but incorrectly assume that these writings dealt with work conducted in alchemical laboratories" (Skar 2003: 3).

⁴⁵ Skar situates a category of theoretical texts somewhere between texts explicitly on laboratory-based *waidan* and more body-centered *neidan* (see Skar 2003: 161–164).

⁴⁶ "The alchemists did not succeed in producing gold or the Grand Elixir, but they did discover many new facts and useful compounds, and did lay much of the foundation upon which the science of chemistry has been erected" (Davis et al. 1938: 86).

⁴⁷ *Science and Civilisation in China, vol. V: Chemistry and Chemical Technology, part 5: Spagyric Discovery and Invention: Physiological Alchemy* (1983).

⁴⁸ "Jung suggested that the practical chemical element in medieval and Renaissance European alchemy had been much over-rated, believing that a great deal, if not most, of the description in the alchemical writings was essentially mythology, consisting of allegories, metaphorical formulations, poetical analogies and symbolism." (Needham & Lu 1983: xxviii) Although Needham & Lu do not fully align with Jung's religionist and psychologizing stance, they are strongly influenced, and take it as a starting point. "...Western psychological alchemy was concerned not so much, if at all, with actual chemical operations as with states of mind, catharsis, sublimation, purification and the attainment of unity and equilibrium--almost like an auto-psycho-analysis before psycho-analysis had been invented." (Needham & Lu 1983: 2.)

chemical, methods, out of physiological constituents already in the body” (ibid: 27). Immortality as a final aim was also considered strictly material. Thus, Needham & Lu systematically refuse to accept *neidan* as a religious practice, with an aim for spiritual salvation and transcendence (see Hudson 2007: 12–13.) They did recognize the existence of a variety of historical teachers, schools, and sects in different locations, with different usages of terminology and specialization in particular techniques, and within this variety believed to address a historical consensus of basic beliefs they wished to illustrate, however, under the tag of physiological alchemy.⁴⁹ While their conclusions and general framework would be questioned by later scholars, much of their work maintains its value.

Description of neidan in the first research program: a) as physiological alchemy. Needham & Lu’s view on *neidan* definition and overall characterization, described above, serves as a canvas against which to reflect other perspectives. They stress the meaning of various physiological practices, which have existed in Daoist tradition since long, including the role of sexual practices. Their perspective explicitly downplays or disregards the importance of meditative practice, and the discursive or mental cultivation aspect of *neidan*.⁵⁰ The definition of *neidan* as physiological alchemy is so strict that Needham & Lu stand quite alone with this perspective.⁵¹

(2) *Study of neidan as Chinese cultural history:* recognizes the value of Daoism and *neidan* as significant to Chinese cultural development, particularly as seen from the point of view of history and study of literature. These sinological studies have an orientation toward historical narrative and with an aim to understand *neidan* and its significance in relation to Chinese culture, cultural figures, and cultural products.

Arthur Waley’s (1889–1966) notes on alchemy,⁵² in which *neidan* is dealt with only cursively in less than three pages, remain brief, but draw some main lines and clues that are to be followed in the later research. Unlike Davis and Needham with their companions, Waley called for the importance of the study of alchemy as a branch of cultural history rather than a peculiarity of pre-history of science. In Waley’s cultural evolutionary scheme, more than other cultures, Chinese had remained in direct contact with “a neolithic mentality,” and the study of alchemy would here yield insights it would hardly do in other cultural settings. Waley addresses *neidan* through the figures of Zhongli Quan and Lü Dongbin, placed at the origins of most of the *neidan* lineages. He

⁴⁹ *Neidan* materials studied by Needham & Lu included broadly works from different periods, such as the collection *Xiuzhen shishu*, which contains *Zazhu zhixuan pian*, *Jindan dacheng ji*, *Zhong-Lü chuandao ji*, *Zazhu jiejing*, *Wuzhen pian*, *Yulong ji*, *Shangqing ji*, *Wuyi ji*, *Panshan yulu*, and *Huangting jing*. Other materials included works such as *Ruyao jing*, *Jindan sibai zi*, *Huanyuan pian* (by Shi Tai), *Jindan dayao* (by Chen Zhixu), *Xiuzhen taiji hunyuan tu* (by Xiao Daocun), *Neijing tu*, *Xiuzhen tu*, *Xingming guizhi*, and works by Bai Yuchan. Not all sources Needham & Lu quote are unambiguously *neidan* texts, which makes the treatment at points confusing and questionable.

⁵⁰ Before Needham & Lu, Liu Ts’un-yan had already dived into the problematics of *neidan* in several articles, Despeux had published her study in 1979 on a late Ming *neidan* work by Zhao Bichen, and Baldrian-Hussein’s dissertation on Zhong-Lü work *Lingbao bifa* had been published in 1979, although it took until 1984 for her monograph, based on the dissertation, to appear.

⁵¹ Only Sara Neswald comes partly close—although defining *neidan* more as a meditative ritual practice—, as she considers its aim, surprisingly, “gaining physical immortality” rooted at the transmutation of the physical body through its purification (Neswald 2007: i, 218.) It should be acknowledged that Neswald uses a particularly wide notion of “body.”

⁵² “Notes on Chinese Alchemy (‘Supplementary to Johnson’s’ A Study of Chinese Alchemy)” (1930).

notes Peng Xiao's distinction of "exoteric" and "esoteric" alchemy (*waidan* / *neidan*), and clearly points out that later texts on Chinese alchemy deal primarily with "mental and physical re-education", where alchemical components are given symbolic meanings and related to the human body. The *Longhu jing*⁵³ markedly represents a complete process based on these correspondences, and Bai Yuchan is noted as a main representative of *neidan* involving Buddhist influence who described three kinds of *neidan* methods with varying correspondences of lead and mercury.⁵⁴ Waley considers *neidan* a purely *mystical alchemy*—a stark contrast to Needham—which does not attempt to veil its actual practices, unlike the western alchemy in his interpretation does.⁵⁵

Liu T'sun-yan (1917–2009) drew equally from Qing and Western philological scholarship. Active half of his life in Australia, and thus within the realm of Western academic culture, he published widely in English and in Chinese. (Penny 2006b: 1–7.) To some measure vocally adhering to traditional literati suspicions concerning Daoism, Liu wrote penetratingly about the *neidan* affiliations of the literati of Song (960–1279) to Ming (1368–1644) dynasties,⁵⁶ claiming that the historical development toward mutual existence of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism, within Chinese culture, was essentially an "unconscious" process of accommodation. Several *neidan* masters had been Confucian scholars or affiliated Buddhists before turning to *neidan*, and the development of *neidan* could be viewed through the literati class interest toward the alchemical process. His articles on the life and teachings of Lu Xixing and Wu Shouyang were long unparalleled in Western research,⁵⁷ and in "Taoist Self-Cultivation in Ming Thought" (1970) Liu presents a perceiving overview of some of the main concepts of *neidan* practice. With some disdain, his work also lays out the measure in which the sexual interpretation of dual cultivation came to influence the Ming dynasty understanding of *neidan*, and has given pointers to the works of later researchers.

Yao Tao-chung's dissertation (1980)⁵⁸ makes a thorough historical survey of the development of Quanzhen during the 12th and 13th centuries in North China, delineating its significance to Chinese cultural history, society and literature. Paulino Belamide's dissertation (2002) observes "early Quanzhen self-cultivation" in the writings attributed to Qiu Chuji, particularly the *Dadan zhihi*.⁵⁹ Lowell Skar's dissertation (2003), examines the background and formation of "golden elixir" (*jindan*) alchemy, as a continuum involving both *waidan* and *neidan*,

⁵³ *Longhu jing* (Scripture of the Dragon and Tiger).

⁵⁴ 1) Body as lead, heart/mind as mercury, 2) breath as lead, spirit ("soul") as mercury, 3) semen as lead, blood as mercury.

⁵⁵ Like Davis and Needham, Waley spends considerable effort to discuss the influence of alchemical ideas and practices between China and India, Central Asia, Egypt and Greece.

⁵⁶ "Lu Hsi-hsing: A Confucian Scholar, Taoist Priest and Buddhist Devotee of the Sixteenth Century" (1965); "Lu Hsi-hsing and his Commentaries on the Ts'an-t'ungch'i" (1968/1976); "Taoist Self-Cultivation in Ming Thought" (1970); "The Syncretism of the Three Teachings in Sung-Yüan China" (1984); "Wu Shou-yang: The Return to the Pure Essence" (1984).

⁵⁷ Works of Mozi (2020) and van Enckevort (2013, 2014) have deepened and corrected these aspects.

⁵⁸ Ch'üan-Chen: a new Taoist sect in North China during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries" (1980), Ph. D. dissertation.

⁵⁹ "Self-Cultivation and Quanzhen Daoism, with Special Reference to the Legacy of Qiu Chuji" (2002), Ph.D. dissertation. Submitted in religious studies.

in Chinese literati culture from the fourth to the fifteenth centuries.⁶⁰ It evaluates the contributions of these teachings made to the “evolving Chinese culture,” studying “the golden elixir tradition as part of China's cultural past.” Mapping out the history of what was later to become the Southern lineage (Nanzong), Skar’s theoretical context is strongly tied to the study of Chinese culture. His work was guided by Nathan Sivin, a close collaborator of Needham’s. Li Wang’s dissertation (2004) on Bai Yuchan’s life and teachings is a thorough historical basic research—submitted to religious studies—with dense documentation of sources.⁶¹ In Bai Yuchan’s synthesis various earlier *neidan* traditions combine with Daoist techniques, Neo-Confucian and Chan Buddhist ideas, focus on the importance of the mind (*xin*), and ritual practice as expressions of his “ultimate concern” for transcendence, immortality, and salvation. However fascinating and detailed the understanding of original materials by this actual founder of Southern lineage, the conclusions and the interpretive implications in this sweeping work remain modest. Liu Xun⁶² has studied, from a meticulously historical perspective, the *neidan* circles of twentieth century Shanghai, related to the influence of Chen Yingning. His 2009 monograph corrects some of the long-influential narrative on “decay of Daoism” in the Ming and Qing (1644–1911), and describes the flourishing and adaptation of Daoist communities in the face of modernity within a discourses on nationalism, science, and the body. Liu has also written on the late-Ming dual cultivation.

Description of neidan in the second research program: These historically oriented scholars tend to accept the constructs of their studies mostly as historical facts, and have not particularly endeavored to construct generalizing models of *neidan*. Alternatively they have subscribed to conceptualizations of the following, third research program, particularly a description similar to Farzeen Baldrian-Hussein.

(3) *Study of neidan as discourse and doctrine* : centers mostly on the French tradition of sinology, thus besides being thoroughly textual, historical and hermeneutic, the approach is informed by continental and postmodern philosophy, literary studies, and history of ideas. Continuing largely on the lines of the second research program, this approach is represented by the French sinologists Farzeen Baldrian-Hussein (1945–2009), Catherine Despeux (b.1945), and Isabelle Robinet (1932–2000). Italian scholars Monica Esposito (1962–2011) and Fabrizio Pregadio (b. 1957) may be included as central with their detailed and careful work, somewhat faithful to that of their teachers and colleagues. This group of scholars represents the main thrust within the studies, and marks the recognition of main distinctions of historical lineages with the Western studies on *neidan*.

⁶⁰ “Golden Elixir Alchemy: The Formation of the Southern Lineage and the Transformation of Medieval China” (2003), Ph.D. dissertation. Skar seems to have moved to quite different areas of research since his dissertation.

⁶¹ “A Daoist Way of Transcendence: Bai Yuchan’s Inner Alchemical Thought and Practice” (2004), Ph.D. dissertation.

⁶² “In Search of Immortality: Daoist Inner Alchemy in Early Twentieth Century China” Ph.D. dissertation (2001), “Numinous Father and the Holy Mother: Late-Ming Duo Cultivation Practice” (2008), *Daoist Modern. Innovation, Lay Practice, and the Community of Inner Alchemy in Republican Shanghai* (2009), “Scientizing the Body of the Nation: Chen Yingning and the Reinvention of Daoist Inner Alchemy in 1930s Shanghai” (2012).

Baldrian-Hussein's work centers on the Song dynasty *neidan*, Zhong-Lü lineage, and particularly the *Lingbao bifa*,⁶³ in a first pioneering study (1984) to detail the doctrines and practices of a particular lineage.⁶⁴ Robinet's input on the studies has been formative with a focus on the structures of *neidan* language, and its connection to earlier traditions, particularly the Highest Clarity (Shangqing). She has published an important introductory collection of essays (1995) on *neidan*.⁶⁵ Despeux has studied the late imperial *neidan*,⁶⁶ the so-called Wu-Liu lineage as represented by Zhao Bichen (1979), and female alchemy (*nüdan*) in three separate publications, as well as practices and representations of the body, particularly the history of the *Xiuzhen tu* (2018).

Esposito sheds light on the continuities and discontinuities in Qing dynasty Daoism, particularly the teachings and the construction of the Longmen lineage of Jingai mountain, and the history and research of *Daozang jiyao*, a collection containing 310 texts of which several are on late imperial *neidan*.⁶⁷ Pregadio began with work on *waidan* and the *Cantong qi*, and has later become a major voice in *neidan* studies.⁶⁸ With diligent productivity, combined to brilliantly precise scholarship, he has published several translations and studies, latest of which is the first proper anthology of *neidan* texts, with introductions to some of the main representatives of the *neidan* tradition, but containing interestingly nothing of *nüdan*. Pierre Marsone, in his published dissertation (2011), has tried to uncover the early Quanzhen doctrine of Wang Zhe from the writings ascribed to him and his direct disciples. He argues that the early Quanzhen cultivation may

⁶³ *Lingbao bifa* (Complete Methods of the Numinous Treasure).

⁶⁴ "Procédés secrets du joyau magique: Traité d'alchimie taoïste du Xle siècle" (1984); "Yüeh-yang and Lü Tung-pin's Ch'in-yüan ch'un: A Sung Alchemical Poem" (1985); "Lü Tung-pin in Northern Sung Literature" (1986); "Inner Alchemy: Notes on the Origin and Use of the Term *neidan*." (1989); "Taoist Beliefs in Literary Circles of the Sung Dynasty - Su Shi (1037-1101) and his Techniques of Survival." (1996).

⁶⁵ "L'unité transcendante des Trois Enseignements selon les taoïstes des Sung et des Yüan" (1985); "L'alchimie interne dans le taoïsme [Procédés Secrets du Joyau Magique—Traité d'Alchimie Taoïste du Xle siècle, traduit du chinois par Farzeen Baldrian-Hussein, Paris 1984]" (1986); "Original Contributions of Neidan to Taoism and Chinese Thought" (1989); "Reserche sur l'alchimie intérieure (neidan): L'école Zhenyuan" (1989); *Introduction à l'alchimie intérieure taoïste: De l'unité et de la multiplicité. Avec une traduction commentée des Versets de l'éveil à la Vérité* (1995); "Under the Song and the Yuan: Interior Alchemy (1997); "De quelques effets du bouddhisme sur la problématique taoïste: Aspects de la confrontation du taoïsme au bouddhisme" (2004); *The World Upside Down – Essays on Taoist Internal Alchemy* (2011).

⁶⁶ Zhao Bichen: *Traité d'Alchimie et de Physiologie taoïste (Weisheng Shenglixue Mingzhi)* (1979); "Les lectures alchimiques du Hsi-yu-chi" (1985); *Immortelles de la Chine ancien: Taoïsme et alchimie féminine* (1990); *Le corps, champ spatio-temporel, souche d'identité* (1996); *Women in Daoism* (2003) with Livia Kohn; "Visual Representations of the Body in Chinese Medical and Daoist Texts from the Song to the Qing Period (Tenth to Nineteenth Century)" (2005); "Alchimie symbolique et du corps dans la Chine du Moyen Âge (X–XIVe siècles)" (2005); *Pratiques des femmes taoïstes : Méditation et alchimie intérieure* (2013); *Le Chemin de L'éveil* (2015); *Taoism and Self Knowledge. The Chart for the Cultivation of Perfection (Xiuzhen tu)* (2018).

⁶⁷ "La Porte du Dragon: L'Ecole Longmen du mont Jingai et ses pratiques alchimiques d'après le Daozang Xubian (Suite au Canon Taoïste)" (1993), a Ph. D. dissertation; *L'alchimia del soffio: La pratica della visione interiore nell'alchimia taoista* (1997); "Longmen Taoism in Qing China: Doctrinal Ideal and Local Reality" (2001); "The Discovery of Jiang Yuanting's Daozang Jiyao in Jiangnan: A Presentation of the Daoist Canon of the Qing Dynasty" (2007); "The Daozang jiyao Project: Mutations of a Canon" (2009); *Creative Daoism* (2013); *Facets of Qing Daoism* (2014).

⁶⁸ "The Representation of Time in the *Zhouyi cantong qi*" (1995); "Inner Alchemy" (2000); "The Early History of the Zhouyi cantong qi" (2002); "The Notion of 'Form' and the Ways of Liberation in Daoism" (2004); "Early Daoist Meditation and the Origins of Inner Alchemy" (2006); *Awakening to Reality: The "Regulated Verses" of the Wuzhen pian, a Taoist Classic of Internal Alchemy* (2009); *The Seal of the Unity of the Three: A Study and Translation of the Cantong qi, the Source of the Taoist Way of the Golden Elixir, Vols. 1 & 2* (2011); *Commentary on the Mirror for Compounding the Medicine* (2013); *Cultivating the Tao. Taoism and Internal Alchemy* (2013); "Destiny, Vital Force, or Existence? On the Meanings of Ming in Daoist Internal Alchemy and Its Relation to Xing or Human Nature" (2014); "Superior Virtue, Inferior Virtue: A Doctrinal Theme in the Works of the Daoist Master Liu Yiming (1734–1821)" (2014); "The Alchemical Body in Daoism" (2015); "Creation and Its Inversion – Cosmos, Human Being, and Elixir in the Cantong qi (The Seal of the Unity of the Three)" (2015); "Discriminations in Cultivating the Tao: Liu Yiming (1734–1821) and His Xiuzhen houbian" (2015); "Laozi and Internal Alchemy" (2018); "Which is the Daoist Immortal Body?" (2018); *Taoist Internal Alchemy – An Anthology of Neidan Texts* (2019).

have not contained an explicit focus on the idea of transformation, and thus *neidan* in the proper sense, but instead a focus on reaching state of stillness and clarity (*qingjing*) through ascetic discipline.⁶⁹ Harder to place in this typology, Stephen Eskildsen's⁷⁰ monograph (2004) provides selected translations of mostly early Quanzhen literature with overview on doctrines and praxis, and his several *neidan*-related articles deal with various aspects of meditative and ascetic practice with interest in mystical experience.

Some of these scholars have described *neidan* in overall terms often based on a close-reading of some *neidan* authors, such as Li Daochun or Liu Yiming, or a particular lineage, such as Zhong-Lü. Or one notes a wish to find more "true" or higher *neidan* among the lesser representations, for example distinguishing spiritual from "physiological" or even "sexual," a pursuit which often seems to reflect the ideology of a particular *neidan* author. In some occasions one may also read a subtext of *neidan* essentially as a homogenic whole. Characteristic in this group of works is that apart from a generic philological, historical, sinological approach usually no explicit theoretical framework of interpretation is introduced, thus a form of traditional sinology is assumed.

Description of neidan in the third research program: b) primarily as a technique of enlightenment, or symbolical alchemy (Robinet). Isabelle Robinet's description and definition of *neidan* contrasts steeply with that of Needham & Lu. Writing that *neidan* does not aim to "produce a particular physical substance," Robinet denies Needham & Lu's perspective of *neidan* as producing a biochemical elixir, and highlights particularly those aspects of mental cultivation which they seem to disregard. While Robinet does not entirely neglect the physiological practices, she places them at a secondary position. To her, *neidan* is above all a "technique of enlightenment," a method of understanding as an existential and intellectual integration. The function of *neidan* is "didactic" in the sense of masters trying to explain and induce their mystical experience on the disciples. Analogical to the breathing techniques on the physiological level, through the engagement to symbolical *neidan* language with its "knotty problems" and "logjams" the practitioners make themselves mentally and spiritually flexible. As an operative discipline to be carried through, the mental exercise, combined to its physiological counterpart, gives birth to a new person. (Robinet 1997: 216–218.)

Robinet presents an important model for distinguishing *neidan* discourse and its texts, which should always address: 1) a combination of mental and physiological practice, the mental

⁶⁹ "Wang Chongyang (1113-1170) et la fondation du Quanzhen" (2001), "Accounts of the Foundations of the Quanzhen Movement: A Hagiographic Treatment of History" (2001), "Marone Pierre. Wang Chongyang (1113-1170) et la fondation du Quanzhen." (2001), *Wang Chongyang et la fondation du Quanzhen: ascètes taoïste et alchimie intérieure* (2011).

⁷⁰ "Neidan Master Chen Pu's Nine Stages of Transformation" (2001); *The Teachings and Practices of the Early Quanzhen Masters* (2004); "Emergency Death Meditations for Internal Alchemists" (2006); "Neidan Methods for Opening the Gate of Heaven" (2009); "Debating what Lü Dongbin Practiced: Why did Yuan Daoist Miao Shanshi Denounce the Zhong-Lü Texts?" (2016); "Bodhidharma Outside Chan Literature: Immortal, Inner Alchemist, and Emissary from the Eternal Realm" (2017); "Some Wondrous Effects of Inner Calm, as Described and Explained by Yu Yan's *Zhouyi cantong qi fahui*" (2019); "The Ancient Awl of 700 Years: Hibernation and Quanzhen Meditation" (2020).

aspect usually predominating; 2) a synthesis of Daoist approaches and elements, certain Buddhist speculation and methods, and references to Confucian texts; 3) the trigrams and hexagrams of the *Yijing* in a systematic way; and 4) chemical practices, in an internalized and metaphorical sense. The two latter features are combined: all *neidan* texts use chemical terminology and place them in relation to the trigrams of the *Yijing*. If this feature is missing, a text does not qualify into the range of *neidan* materials, but concerns only with breathing and *qi* exercises and gymnastics, that is *yangsheng*, the tradition known nowadays as *qigong*. Robinet argues, and this has been widely accepted, that this procedure is necessary for limiting the subject matter, as otherwise one would face an enormous amount of materials, and the historical significance of *neidan* would be lost. (Robinet 1989: 301; Robinet 1997: 217.) While Robinet's delimitation is helpful, it may be too limiting, particularly in terms of late imperial *neidan*.

Robinet's focus is more in the doctrine and intellectual history, and she tends to leave aside the question of practice. She is also more interested in historical continuities than fractures, and although she describes historical lineages and authors, she does not tie the historical specifics closely to her narrative, as also noted by Wile (1997) and Hudson (2007). While Robinet highlights the intellectual nature of *neidan* in contrast to earlier Daoist traditions, and presents this cosmologically speculative aspect as its central defining feature, clearly distinguishing it from earlier Daoist meditation and physiological practices, she does not represent *neidan* as only that. Despite a tendency to consider *neidan* a unitary tradition, as do Needham & Lu to some extent, by preferring certain authors as more representative or original, she also recognizes the variety of lineages, doctrines and practices.⁷¹

Description of neidan in the third research program: c) as a synthesis of psychophysiological practices (Baldrian-Hussein). While Needham & Lu describe the *neidan* process mainly through a *physiological* transformation and Robinet as an *intellectual* or *existential* transmutation working on the level of symbols and making way to an experience of enlightenment, Baldrian-Hussein (1984: 14) takes the position of negotiation: *neidan* as a process which includes a physiological as well as a spiritual transformation. In her 1989 article, she perceives the term on lines of Wu Wu (fl. 1163), who treated it as a syncretic system including all longevity methods. However, discussing *neidan* only as a *collection of psychophysiological techniques* leaves out some of the arguably distinctive features of *neidan*, namely the cosmological speculation and its whole theoretical framework discussed so arduously by Robinet, and at the same time reduces *neidan* to the level of *yangsheng* (longevity techniques). In a more recent authoritative description in the *Encyclopedia of Taoism*

⁷¹ Other scholars, whose representation of *neidan* comes close to Robinet's include most notably Pregadio & Skar in their *Daoism Handbook* article (2000: 464, 481), and Goossaert during the time of his dissertation publication (1997b: 598; 1997: 148-151).

(2008)⁷² Baldrian-Hussein defines *neidan* as a synthetic doctrine and practice aiming at transcendence variously described, and pays attention to the different influences integrated. In this description she includes some of the aspects that lacked in her earlier representations, particularly the metaphysical speculation. It should be noted that her definition is quite open for variation, and seemed to evolve throughout the years, it is centrally practice-based, although it includes mental or meditative cultivation. I view it as an inclusive description that many scholars on the field could easily agree with, while in its inclusiveness it may lose some of the clarity of Robinet's more strict definition.⁷³

Description of neidan in the third research program: d) as a range of esoteric doctrines and practices (Pregadio). In *Daoism Handbook* (2000) description Pregadio & Skar rely largely on Robinet's perceptions on *neidan* with the exception that they stress variety within the tradition more explicitly.⁷⁴ They describe the cosmological speculation as the defining factor that distinguishes *neidan* from other meditation and longevity practices (Pregadio & Skar 2000: 481). Pregadio has continued to develop his perspective in a long series of further publications. In a recent description (2018b: 397–398) he pays increasingly more attention to the great variety of approaches within *neidan* tradition. As a new characteristic, he has proceeded to make a differentiation between *two modes of cultivation*, relating to two differing conceptions of the "elixir" in *neidan*, corresponding to the idea of Northern and Southern lineages.⁷⁵ Concerning variety, Pregadio writes that different forms of *neidan* differ sometimes considerably from one another, some giving priority to "its purely spiritual aspect," others emphasizing the performance of

⁷² "The form of doctrine and practice conventionally known as *neidan* involves a synthesis of theories derived from the cosmological trends of *waidan* (external alchemy), metaphysical speculations expressed through the emblems of the *Yijing* and other cosmological patterns, and techniques originally belonging to *yangsheng* (Nourishing Life) traditions such as meditation, breathing (*xingqi*), gymnastics (*daoyin*), and sexual hygiene (*fangzhong shu*). The aim of *neidan* is described as achieving immortality or a state of union with the Dao; this is variously imagined as attaining the rank of a celestial immortal (*tianxian* 天仙), becoming a "celestial official" (*tianguan* 天官) in the otherworldly bureaucracy, joining one's spirit with the Dao (*yu shen he dao* 與神合道), or obtaining "release from the corpse" (*shijie*). In all of these instances, a *neidan* master is thought not to die, but to undergo a voluntary metamorphosis." (Baldrian-Hussein 2008: 762.)

⁷³ Other scholars whom I perceive sharing a similar type of perspective include Despeux (1990: 9–10; 2018: 2; Kohn & Despeux 2003: 19–20), Esposito (1993: 19–20), Valussi (for some definitions, see 2009: 46; 2012: 201; 2008b: 243), Marsone (Marsone 2010: 289, 292), Eskildsen (2006: 373–374; 2001b: 139; 2004: 201), and Capitanio (2015: 122–123)

⁷⁴ "*Neidan* or 'inner alchemy' refers to a range of esoteric doctrines and practices that adepts use to transcend the individual and cosmological states of being. Although its origins are obscure, scholars have isolated several strands that have contributed to its development. They derived from diverse sources, including classical Daoist texts, correlative cosmology, *Yijing* (Book of Changes) lore, meditational and physical disciplines of *yangsheng* (nourishing life), cosmological traditions of *waidan* (external alchemy), medical theory, Buddhist soteriology and Confucian moral philosophy. By the twelfth century, adepts had woven these various strands into codified traditions. *Neidan* traditions enabled them to reach their goal by adopting doctrinal elements from these different sources, synthesizing and re-elaborating a range of practices, from physical to meditational, and engaging in intellectual speculation on the nature of being and non-being..." (Pregadio & Skar 2000: 464.) While this description itself may aim to cover the whole of *neidan*, the article actually deals only with Zhong-Lü and Nanzong heritage, and this is clearly stated.

⁷⁵ "Internal Alchemy is a complex—and by no means unitary—discipline that developed from around 700 CE. While it is often described as merely "physiological," it actually merges in different ways and to different extents several earlier traditions of doctrine and practice: teachings from the *Daode jing*, early Daoist meditation practices, imagery and terminology from External Alchemy (*Waidan*), methods from the disciplines of "nourishing life" (*yangsheng*, especially those concerned with breathing), as well as doctrinal principles drawn from Confucianism, Neo-Confucianism, and Buddhism, to mention only the most important components. *Neidan* aims to produce the elixir within the alchemist's own person according to two main models of doctrine and practice. The first model consists in purifying one's mind of defilements and passions, in order to "see one's Nature" (*jianxing*), which is equated to the elixir. In the second model, each of the three main components of the cosmos and the human being – spirit (*shen*), breath (*qi*), and essence (*jing*) – is reintegrated into the previous one, in order to invert the sequence in which they come forth from the Dao, and to return to the inception of the process. This model has been codified in different forms of practice." (Pregadio 2018b: 397–398.)

various practices (Pregadio 2009: 3). And further, that until our times "it has been transmitted in a large number of lineages and branches, each of which has had its own views of Neidan itself and of its practice." (Pregadio 2015a: 12). A perspective of recognizing greater historical variation within *neidan* discourse characterizes most recent approaches to *neidan*, and several publications have shown interest in greater detail of definition or overall description.⁷⁶

(4) *Study of neidan as religion within a multidisciplinary and theoretically diverse orientation* : is conducted in departments of history, Asian / Chinese studies, and study of religion, and it is theoretically informed by postmodern thought, feminist theory, postcolonialism, sociological theories, discourse theory, and theories of religion. Scholars locate more internationally. The work of some of the more recently matured sinologists is not solely focused to the basic and most fundamental aspects of philology, exegetics, and textuality, but they study *neidan* historically through well-defined theoretical frameworks. Here *neidan* is explicitly perceived and approached as a religious doctrine and praxis, and sometimes theorized in religious studies context. These scholars include Elena Valussi, Louis Komjathy, Vincent Goossaert, Clarke Hudson, Sara Neswald, Paul Crowe, Joshua Capitanio, Paul van Enkevort, and Ilia Mozias.

Vincent Goossaert has studied the institutional aspects of Complete perfection (Quanzhen) from a sociology of religion perspective, with an innovative application of sources such as epigraphy.⁷⁷ While he does not address *neidan* directly, his research makes clear that Quanzhen adepts, and *neidan* practitioners in general, did not function in a social vacuum, but were embedded in the social culture and institutional structures of their time. Goossaert has also paid attention to the spirit-writing cults of the Qing, the means of which were central to communication with "immortals" transmitting *neidan* teachings. Elena Valussi's dissertation (2003) forms the foundation for her broad scope of later research articles related to *nüdan* texts appearing in several textual collections. Her main argument is that the specific literature on women's alchemy should be seen as a reflection of tightening moral concern on women's religious activity during Qing.⁷⁸ Louis Komjathy has published broadly on Daoism, his *neidan*-related works center on Quanzhen, Longmen, and the alchemical body.⁷⁹ Particularly, he studied the *Chongyang zhenren jinguan yusuo jue*, which in Komjathy's view, could reflect early Quanzhen teachings, focusing from a comparative religion perspective on the complicated interrelationship between views of self,

⁷⁶ Such works include particularly Hudson (2007), Komjathy (2013, 2015), Capitanio (2015) and Mozias (2020).

⁷⁷ "La création du taoïsme moderne: l'ordre Quanzhen" (1997), "The Invention of an Order: Collective Identity in Thirteenth-Century Quanzhen Taoism" (2001), "The Quanzhen clergy, 1700-1950" (2004), "Quanzhen, what Quanzhen? Late Imperial Daoist Clerical Identities in Lay Perspective" (2013), "Modern Daoist eschatology. Spirit-writing and elite soteriology in late imperial China" (2014), "Spirit-writing, canonization and the rise of divine saviors: Wenchang, Lüzu, and Guandi, 1700-1858" (2015).

⁷⁸ "Beheading the Red Dragon: A History of Female Inner Alchemy in China" (2003) Ph.D. dissertation, "Female Alchemy and Paratext: How to Read *nüdan* in a Historical Context" (2008), "Men and Women in He Longxiang's *Nüdan hebian*" (2008), "Blood, Tigers, Dragons: The Physiology of Transcendence for Women" (2009), "Printing and Religion in the Life of Fu Jinquan: Alchemical Writer, Religious Leader, and Publisher in Sichuan" (2012), "Female Alchemy: Transformation of a Gendered Body" (2014).

⁷⁹ *Cultivating Perfection – Mysticism and Self-transformation in Early Quanzhen Daoism* (2007), "Mapping the Daoist Body, Part 1, The *Neijing tu* in History" (2008), "Mapping the Daoist Body, Part 2, The Text of the *Neijing tu*" (2009), "The Daoist Mystical Body" (2011), *The Way of Complete Perfection* (2014), "Sun Buer: Early Quanzhen Matriarch and the Beginnings of Female Alchemy" (2014), "Daoist Internal Alchemy – Liu Huayang's *Huiming jing*" (2015).

religious praxis and corresponding mystical experiences. However, the presence of actual *neidan* techniques within early Quanzhen remains an open question. Sara Neswald's dissertation (2007) assumes a multidisciplinary and discourse-analytical approach, it centers on drawing out the multivocality of discourse and practice, dispelling the idea of a single and coherent practice of *nüdan* that would extend to all groups and speak in any one voice.⁸⁰ This perspective seems to balance Valussi's perspective of singularly oppressive patriarchy as a reason for the emergence of *nüdan* literature. Clarke Hudson's (2007) dissertation takes on a complicated theoretical setting, it attempts to reconstruct Chen Zhixu's "sexual-alchemical" practices, and views his works as adapting a strategy of secrecy in a competitive marketplace of teachings. Innovative work in several respects, Hudson's interpretation of Chen Zhixu's teaching seems to have received blunt response from certain specialist scholars.

Paul Crowe's dissertation (2004) and following articles examine the construction and the integration of Buddhist and Ru (Neo-Confucian) teachings in the system of Li Daochun.⁸¹ Re-description of *neidan* cultivation enabled Li and his disciples to identify as adepts of the way of the golden elixir, and the restating of all the key internal alchemical terms made possible for them to claim a position outside the Three teachings for their own particular path of training. Paul van Enckevort's articles (2013, 2014) analyze the construction of Quanzhen and Longmen identities in the works of Wu Shouyang, the focus his presumably forthcoming dissertation,⁸² and also manages to clarify notions on the three treasures (*jing, qi, shen*) which often remain vague in scholars' works. Joshua Capitanio (2015) examines the relations of *neidan* and Chan buddhism, particularly in the works attributed to Zhang Boduan.⁸³ Capitanio argues that Buddhist notions were incorporated into Daoist paradigms almost seamlessly, as the particular discursive *niché* that Chan Buddhists managed to carve for themselves in the field of Chinese religion proved to adjoin closely to the space certain forms of Daoism occupied. The latter three scholars have worked through a sociological perspective of identity construction. Ilia Mozias (2020) has studied Lu Xixing, associated by most scholars to the Eastern branch of *neidan*, and to its sexual interpretation.⁸⁴ Mozias challenges this representation, and depicts Lu as a literati who learned *neidan* from books and through spirit-writing.

⁸⁰ "Rhetorical voices in the *neidan* tradition: an interdisciplinary analysis of the *Nüdan hebian* (pref. 1906) compiled by He Longxiang (fl. 1900-1906)" (2007), "Internal Landscapes" (2009).

⁸¹ "Chapters on Awakening to the Real: A Song Dynasty Classic of Inner Alchemy Attributed to Zhang Boduan (ca. 983-1081)" (2000); "The nature and function of the Buddhist and Ru teachings in Li Daochun's (fl. ca. 1288) Wondrous Way of Peerless Orthodox Truth" (2004), a Ph. D. dissertation; "Nature, Motion, and Stillness: Li Daochun's Vision of the Three Teachings" (2012); "Dao Learning and the Golden Elixir: Shared Paths to Perfection" (2014).

⁸² "Quanzhen and Longmen Identities in the Works of Wu Shouyang" (2013), "The Three Treasures – An Enquiry into the Writings of Wu Shouyang" (2014).

⁸³ "Portrayals of Chan Buddhism in the Literature of Internal Alchemy" (2015), "Buddhist Tales of Lü Dongbin" (2016).

⁸⁴ "Immortals and Alchemists: Spirit-Writing and Self-Cultivation in Ming Daoism" (2018), *The Literati path to Immortality - The Alchemical Teachings of Lu Xixing* (2020), based on dissertation.

Description of neidan in the fourth research program: e) as a field of variations of contemplative practice (Hudson). Clarke Hudson has carefully described *neidan* through a metastructure which allows for structural and historical variation while containing some unifying elements, but not necessarily all at once. Following Robinet, he assesses critically definitions which treat *neidan* as a synthesis of longevity practices, as *neidan* should primarily be defined in terms of discourse. (Hudson 2007: 19.)⁸⁵ However, Hudson explicitly aims to be more open for a wider range of variation within *neidan* tradition than what for example Robinet would allow. Instead of a unitary definition based on certain fixed aspects he writes, that if *neidan* is to be taken as "a multidimensional field of variations," it can only be understood through historical and structural comparison (ibid: 211).⁸⁶ In a theoretically ambitious approach, Hudson takes the consensus view of the "contemporary-traditional" Chinese scholars as a prototype model,⁸⁷ against which other variations and views are reflected upon, aiming "to test it critically, compare it with other, alternative forms of inner alchemy, and arrive at a broader picture of the field of inner alchemy in history" (ibid: 213–214).⁸⁸ Within *neidan* studies Hudson's approach to defining and describing *neidan* seems unique particularly in the level of reflexivity. This separates it most clearly from that of Pregadio. To my knowledge, no other scholar in *neidan* studies has attempted such a critical and open definition. Clearest lack of it which I can think of, is it being unpractically complex. Also, the idea of "refining corporeal energies" may tie it unnecessarily much to a Southern lineage model of "cultivating *ming* first," excluding the Northern lineage.⁸⁹

Discussion. The movement in this typology of research programs is meant as roughly, but not entirely, chronological in emergence. While the study of *neidan* in the context of history of scientific thought is outdated, the three other research programs should be seen as simultaneously competing of the privilege to speak authoritatively about *neidan*. In all approaches the basic requirements of philological-linguistic competence must generally be met. In some cases, such competition may be dramatic in terms of scholarly inclusion and exclusion: who is allowed to

⁸⁵ In his shortest formulations, Hudson defines *neidan* as "a form of self-cultivation, leading to transcendence, in which discourse drawn from laboratory alchemy and the *Book of Changes* (*Yijing* 易經) is applied to the practice of refining corporeal energies" (Hudson 2007: 2), and in which internal alchemists "aim to join yin and yang, and recover primal perfection, through contemplative practice" (ibid: 215).

⁸⁶ "I take my theoretical approach to the study of inner alchemy (or the study of Daoism, or religion) from Benson Saler's book [*Conceptualizing Religion*] on defining religion. Saler advocates a comparative, polythetic, or multifactorial approach informed by prototype theory. Following Saler, I attempt to define inner alchemy in terms of a collection of elements, rather than one central feature or paradigmatic case or text such as the *Wuzhen pian*, and do not expect to find any one specific element present within all forms of inner alchemy." (Hudson 2007: 212.)

⁸⁷ This "standard account" he identifies as "a late imperial consensus based on the teachings of writers like Wu Shouyang, Liu Huayang, Liu Yiming and Zhao Bichen, *Qinghua miwen* and *Xingming guizhi*; these late imperial teachings in turn are derived in large part from the Southern Lineage established by Bai Yuchan" (ibid: 213).

⁸⁸ Such a prototype does not seem to be an explicit or a self-conscious paradigm for Chinese scholars. "My sense is that contemporary traditional scholars believe that inner alchemy, at heart, is a true tradition, and that truth is unitary; thus, they are less likely to be critical about their own categories." (Hudson 2007: 213.)

⁸⁹ Ilia Mozias (2020) follows Hudson's ideas, as does Capitanio (2015). In their general descriptions, none of these scholars have paid enough attention to the "two modes of cultivation in *neidan*," the point Pregadio has lately brought more clearly forward, an issue which relates directly to the question of understanding the nature of early Quanzhen "*neidan*". This issue has remained somewhat blurry in all the major Quanzhen studies, and it will be further opened in one of the following thematic discussions.

speak, and who not. This may appear as opposition in publications, but also take the form of hostility on the level of research community and personal relations, and may lead to promising careers ruined, a topic for studies of sociology of science. I suggest the emergence of successive research programs may be associated with the various "turns" within the humanities and social sciences. The emergence of the "Chinese cultural history" perspective may be marked by and reflect the *cultural turn*, a move away from a positivist epistemology toward meaning. Undoubtedly it is a shift of studies from natural sciences context into the humanities. The emergence of the third, "discourse and doctrine" perspective, which could be taken simply as a different discourse community (anglophone–francophone), may be signaled also by the *linguistic turn* in the humanities, with its origins in the structuralism of the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913). These two research programs may be taken to represent a broadly sinology dominating second phase in the studies, with a history and philology orientation. Finally, the emergence of the fourth, "multidisciplinary and theoretically diverse" perspective may be marked by response to successive other turns, such as the "practice turn" and "material turn," as well as the postmodern critiques.

The descriptions of *neidan* have demonstrated that, within Western scholarship, *neidan* has been construed in variant ways, which partially follow those of *neidan* discourse itself. They also reflect shifts in what I have termed research programs. Descriptions of *neidan* as "physiological alchemy," "psychophysiological practices," and "technique of enlightenment" express some of the variety within in the tradition: of seeking physical longevity (cultivating *ming*) or spiritual transcendence (cultivating *xing*), and the variant emphasis given them by different lineages and authors. The reading of "physiological alchemy" reflects positivist epistemology and modern Chinese scientific discourse of *neidan*. The scholarly attempts for a more inclusive conception of *neidan* reflect an active move away from essentialism. These research programs are not unambiguous categories, but may include several interpretive approaches, and some scholars are difficult to fit neatly in any. In all cases such categorization is more or less artificial.

I reconstruct different renditions of *neidan* as performing various *cognitive tasks*.⁹⁰ For the pioneering Western scholars, it was first necessary to preliminarily distinguish *neidan* materials from those of operative alchemy, and on the other hand, to recognize the function of the physical body in the process, somewhat contrary to the representation and notion of "spiritual alchemy" in the West.⁹¹ Although describing *neidan* as a primarily physiological practice aiming for longevity on physical plane neglects mental, meditative or religious aspects, and is far too inclusive in terms of larger Daoist tradition, as well as the more generic *yangsheng*, it does highlight the distinctly body-centered nature in some aspects of *neidan* cultivation. Describing *neidan* as a synthesis of psychophysiological practices has brought to the fore also the more contemplative nature of the

⁹⁰ Here one should keep in mind that Western scholars read and consider their own work critically also against the publications of Chinese and Japanese scholars.

⁹¹ See Needham et al. 1983: 1–20; Hanegraaff 2012: 195–197, 277–295.

praxis: the process should not be perceived only as physiological but one that includes a spiritual component, aiming not only for long life, but for a "mystical union," and that we are concerned with a religious endeavour. However, description of *neidan* as a synthesis of practices is too open, and following this lead only would make the scope of the field of research too wide. Recognizing the discourse nature of *neidan* and the linguistic functions has helped to narrow down and greatly clarify the distinctive features of *neidan* through the particular cosmological speculations and the mental cultivation aspect via the didactic use of symbolic language. Description of *neidan* as a range of doctrines and practices, then, acknowledges multiple simultaneous approaches, interpretations, and levels in the traditional *neidan* discourse. Taking *neidan* as a field of variations of contemplative practice brings in the explicit reflection of the category of *neidan* and its discursive history.

The focus of chapter 5 is to drill slightly deeper into the subject matter of internal alchemy through three points of entry: "sexual alchemy," female alchemy, and early Quanzhen *neidan*. The first theme has much to do with negotiation and conflict on "orthodox" practice, also reflected to academic discourse. I particularly analyze the scholarly representation of Chen Zhixu (fl. 1329–1336) and his *neidan*. The second theme has more to do with power and female agency. I analyze the question if female alchemy should be read as a genuine empowerment of women or rather as a counter-revolutionary discourse. The third concerns largely the "nature" of internal alchemy, and its possible models. I analyze the reconstructions of early Quanzhen *neidan*. While giving more attention to the marginals of *neidan* discourse than its mainstream, these themes illustrate perspectives to the *academic discourse on neidan*. I represent in some detail the most important research on these sub-fields, positions toward the given debates, critique received, and to a certain degree, but not rigidly, analyze claims and positions based on the theoretical frame. Through a representation of aspects of *neidan* studies, and problematizing them, differentiation is made of views, and specialist scholars are positioned in relation to these topics. These again, may be taken as representative of research programs with varying interests concerning *neidan*. By doing this, I try to characterize also larger aspects of the state of the field. In each section, I first introduce and present an overview of relevant studies on the subject area, identify and take up a particular issue of debate within this theme, and then discuss some of the indications. In order to both illustrate the scholarly distinctions and positions clearly and to introduce something of the subject matter of *neidan*, I will occasionally make extensive quotations. After diving into these three arenas of *neidan* studies, I will collect some fruits of the analysis.

5. DRILLING HOLES TO HUNDUN (CHAOS)

5.1 Theme one: "sexual alchemy"

Literature review. Sexual cultivation in *neidan* context, referred to by terms such as *yinyang pai* ("yin-yang branch"), *shuangxiu* ("dual cultivation"), or *yindan* ("sexual alchemy") appears something of a taboo among modern and contemporary scholars. Such attitude may carry some of the preconceptions inherent within *neidan* tradition itself: sexual cultivation is—from the point of view of the mainstream dominant voice of *neidan*—often judged as heterodox or deviant practice. *Yinyang pai* as a term refers to sexual cultivation practice within *neidan* context more broadly. It should be taken as an anachronistic heuristic category, not a term that sexual alchemists used to describe themselves (Hudson 2007: 369). It does not denote a specific lineage, but several. Such would be the dual cultivation branch within the Southern lineage (Nanzong),⁹² the Eastern branch (Dongpai) associated with Lu Xixing (1520–1601 or 1606), and the Western branch (Xipai) associated with Li Xiyue (1806–1856), among possibly others. The use of terms "sexual alchemy" and "sexual alchemist" have been criticized by some scholars, obviously since at least the latter term "has no correspondence in Chinese" (Pregadio 2019: 183). If careful, one should perhaps speak of *neidan* lineages and practitioners applying sexual techniques within their *neidan* repertoire, or a certain part of it. The borders between "actual" *neidan* sexual paired cultivation and more mainstream bedroom arts (*fangzhong shu*) are not necessarily clear-cut, for instance, *neidan* terminology and the landmark technique of the small heavenly cycle (*xiao zhoutian*) may be used within the bedchamber arts' textual sources, and they do not necessarily indicate a *neidan* work *per se*.

Attitudes toward sexual practices among *neidan* authors varied. Some masters denied them and propagated solo-meditation; others denied them in discourse but used them in practice; some admitted their value in discourse but didn't use them in their own system, or taught them only to some; and yet others propagated them more openly. (Despeux & Kohn 2011: 211–212; Hudson 2007: 376; Liu Ts'un-yan 1976: 203–204.) Historically, sexual practices date earlier than any *neidan* system, and it is possible that a sexual interpretation of the *neidan* process was contained within the tradition from early on. Some scholars have claimed that *all neidan* may have developed from sexual practices,⁹³ particularly from the technique of "reverting the essence to nourish the brain" (*huanjing bunao*), which is a part of many systems, albeit not as sexual practice.⁹⁴ According to another related claim, even *neidan* solo-cultivation may be read as "cultivation of sexual

⁹² Taking as first representatives Zhang Boduan, Liu Yongnian (fl. 1138–1168), and Weng Baoguang (fl. 1173).

⁹³ Hao Qin, particularly. (Hudson 2007, 409.)

⁹⁴ In forms of solo alchemy the technique, or its name-equivalent, is applied as a method of transferring practitioner's refined essence (*jing*) around the body in the celestial circuit.

energy,” only indirectly so.⁹⁵ To generalize, according to dual cultivation theory, the outer medicine (*waiyao*; or, precelestial original *qi*, *xiantian yuanqi*), may be found only within the other person, whereas according to the solo cultivation interpretation the outer medicine is to be found within oneself.⁹⁶ In addition to particular lineages and branches, sexual cultivation practices have been historically associated to individual masters and authors. One of them is Chen Zhixu, of Yuan dynasty (1260–1368), retrospectively a representative of the central branch. However, in the case on Chen Zhixu, Western scholarly opinions differ starkly, and this may be here identified as an interesting case of debate to be addressed in more detail.

Liu Ts'un-yan studied Lu Xixing's life and works in articles “Lu Hsi-hsing: A Confucian Scholar, Taoist Priest and Buddhist Devotee of the Sixteenth Century” (1966) and “Lu Hsi-hsing and His Commentaries on the Ts'an T'ung Ch'i” (1968). The Eastern branch of *neidan* is allegedly found by Lu Xixing, and arguably contains sexual practices in its repertoire. An early stage of *neidan* studies, Liu's approach reflected enough openness toward the Daoist tradition at large, but simultaneously expressed mistrust and took a moralist stance toward his subject matter, particularly concerning the sexual techniques of the *fangzhong shu*.⁹⁷ The second of these articles presents to my knowledge the first sketch of dual cultivation, particularly when taken together with the information of the article “Taoist Self-Cultivation in Ming Thought” (1970), where Liu represents perceivingly some of the main aspects of *neidan* cultivation. He notes that by Song dynasty *fangzhong shu* had become a term associated with “sexual perversions,” whereas a new term *shuangxiu*, had come to express the *neidan* practices involving sexual cultivation. Liu analyzes the life and teachings of Lu Xixing in the context of Daoist influence to the literati views of the Ming, and shows that although Lu interprets the *Cantong qi* from the standpoint of sexual cultivation, he does so in a rather conservative and philosophical manner. In contrast, many other writers on sexual cultivation in the Ming, like Sun Ruzhong, wrote sometimes in a strikingly direct manner.

Joseph Needham and Lu Gwei-Djen offered the next description on sexual internal alchemical techniques in *Physiological Alchemy* (1983).⁹⁸ Having already discussed the bedroom arts in an earlier part, a sub-chapter of this book is devoted for the examination of *neidan* sources involving sexual dual cultivation. Needham & Lu distinguish sexual techniques in *neidan* context as neither hedonistic nor “philoprogenitive” like the bedroom literature could be, but instead aimed at physical immortality. Drawing “indiscriminately from sources of varying dates,” and letting the translations “speak for themselves”—a practice which a scholar of our time would hardly approve

⁹⁵ Most verbally so, Wile (1992: 27–28). Also Despeux and Hudson.

⁹⁶ “Wang Shizhen [1526–1590] proposes a clean division of inner-alchemical approaches into two categories: alchemy which seeks the *pharmaca* for the elixir within the body, and alchemy which seeks the *pharmaca* outside the body. These correspond to the two categories of pure cultivation and dual cultivation. (...) It has remained the dominant way of looking at inner alchemy down to the present day.” (Hudson 2007: 615.)

⁹⁷ Liu 1968 begins by giving an interesting description on the kinds of techniques, which have put them in morally negative light, surely not without reason. He quotes texts by *neidan* authors Li Daochun and Weng Baoguang, the latter being a representative of *yin-yang* branch.

⁹⁸ *Science and Civilisation in China*, vol. 5: *Chemistry and Chemical Technology*, part 5: *Spagyric Discovery and Invention: Physiological Alchemy* (1983), pp. 184–218.

—Needham & Lu seem to combine the analysis of dual cultivation texts with those of bedchamber arts sexual manuals, and support the described ideas with only a few actually *neidan*-related texts.⁹⁹ In Needham & Lu's assessment, following largely the traditional bedroom arts, sexual practice in *neidan* context, however, aimed mostly for *mutual benefit*, proposed frequent change of partners reflecting the institution of concubinage, and stressed non-ejaculation of the male participant. The main technique was constructed as *coitus reservatus* through which ejaculation was re-routed backwards through pressing of the perineum area.¹⁰⁰ Needham & Lu's brief excursion provided a ground for later, more accurate, research.

Douglas Wile's *Art of the Bedchamber* (1992) deals extensively with the broad scope of Chinese sexual cultivation practices, and translates some of the alchemical dual cultivation texts, written by Lu Xixing and Sun Ruzhong (fl. 1615), and three attributed to Zhang Sanfeng. Wile analyzes "sexual alchemy" in a framework of "Chinese sexual yoga," which he views united by the idea and practice of *qi* cultivation. With few secondary studies on sexual dual cultivation in Chinese religion and society published in any language, "Wile's section on the subject has yet to be equalled" (Hudson 2007: 15), attempting a new level of accuracy in translation and managing to clarify the alchemical terminology and the practical constituents in an admirably flowing language. He perceives *qi* cultivation as the uniting factor between the earlier forms of sexual cultivation aiming at health, marital harmony, progeny and longevity, and the alchemical ones aiming at producing the elixir of immortality. Generally admiring Chinese mentalities toward sex, this integrative study ends up to judging views toward the "sexual alchemy texts," stressing their exploitative character toward women as "cauldrons" for alchemical practice. In an attempt to understand these texts, the work does not historically contextualize them and the definitions on lineage differences concerning its *neidan* part remain vague. Also the terms "Taoism" and "Taoist" assume questionable usages.¹⁰¹ Wile's work brings considerable light on the field of Chinese *qi* based sexual practices in general, but Liu Xun (2009: 122) felt obliged to note that there is still a lack of "a truly perceptive study of the sexual inner alchemical techniques." Liu and Hudson have both suggested for such an improvement.

Liu Xun's article "Numinous Father and Holy Mother" (2009), with a slightly different take of alchemical texts than Wile,¹⁰² aims to go beyond some of the prevalent preconceptions to look at alchemical "duo-cultivation" from a more neutral stance, and through proper historical contextualization. Whereas it seems that the patriarchal values of imperial Chinese culture color the

⁹⁹ Such as *Ruyao jing* and *Jindan zhenzhuan*. *Ruyao jing* is a text that has been often interpreted in terms of sexual practice, but may or may not be such by itself. *Jindan zhenzhuan* is a *yinyang* paired cultivation text by Sun Ruzhong.

¹⁰⁰ This technique has maintained some status in the research descriptions of sexual practices, but would seem an overvaluation of a preliminary technique.

¹⁰¹ See Sivin, "On the Word Taoism as a Source of Perplexity. With Special Reference to the Relations of Science and Religion in Traditional China" (1978).

¹⁰² Wile used and translated the texts *Jindan jiuzheng pian* 金丹就正篇 (by Lu Xixing), *Jindan zhenzhuan* 金丹真傳 (by Sun Ruzhong), *Jindan jieyao* 金丹節要 (attributed to "Zhang Sanfeng"), *Caizhen jiyao* 採真機要 (attr. "Zhang Sanfeng"), and *Wugen shu* 無根樹 (attr. "Zhang Sanfeng"). Liu Xun used the texts *Xuanwei xinyin* 玄微心印; *Jindan jieyao* & *Caizhen jiyao* + hagiography and poems; *Jindan zhenzhuan*; and *Daoyuan yiqi* 道元一氣 (Cao Heng, 1636).

dual cultivation texts in terms of a tendency to exploit the female as "cauldrons," there are also instances where *equal position* of male and female practitioner is stressed, or at least great care is given to how the female partners are treated. Alchemical paired practice as documented in Ming- and Qing-dynasty texts demanded considerable financial resources due to detailed consideration in terms of securing guarded and peaceful practice environment for extended periods of time. Thus it commonly demanded collaboration with other similar minded practitioners. Its focus has been the collecting of the "outer medicine" from the partner (in a way considered different from ordinary bedchamber arts) in varying stages of the practice, through ritualized, non-ejaculate sex, which is rendered in divine religious setting through elaborate correlative cosmological symbolism. This qualitative difference, of ritual and transcendent focus instead of pleasure, is stressed in Liu Xun's representation.¹⁰³ It seems that Liu Xun, whose article appeared in 2009, did not consider the rather remarkable progressions made by Hudson in his dissertation which appeared a year or two before.

Clarke Hudson's "Spreading the Dao, Managing Mastership, and Performing Salvation: The Life and Alchemical Teachings of Chen Zhixu" (2007) describes and interprets Chen Zhixu's (1290–1343) biography, his teachings, and the reception of his teachings in later internal alchemical tradition. Hudson pieces together an account of Chen's "sexual alchemical" practices from references scattered throughout his writings, and situates it within the fields of *neidan* and sexual cultivation. In Hudson's theoretically advanced approach, Chen Zhixu is viewed as competing for symbolic capital within a religious field of self-cultivation. Among a variety of fresh perspectives, Hudson criticizes Douglas Wile's typology of textual materials in four categories for mixing "diachronic and morphological" approaches. He makes a suggestion for five categories of sexual practices essentially based on the marker technique of *huanjing bunao* ("reversing the essence to nourish the brain") and their relation to sexual alchemy.¹⁰⁴ Only two of the particular texts arranged by Wile in the category of sexual alchemy would count for Hudson as an actual *neidan* sexual cultivation (Lu Xixing's and Sun Ruzhong's texts), while three of them would represent only *huanjing bunao* dressed in alchemical vocabulary.¹⁰⁵ Altogether, Hudson, draws highly interesting interpretations through an impressive, but somewhat scattered theoretical framework, including theories of religious market, esoteric strategies, master-function, speech-act and performativity, imperialist inclusivism, and primary salvation and secondary salvific effects.

¹⁰³ "The differences Cao Heng [fl.1631] saw between duo-cultivators and other rampantly erotic and sexual practices appear in several areas: the normative conceptualization of self and body; the self-discipline and goals of the practice; and the technological, economic, and material dimensions associated with the practice. These are differences and distinctions of quality, not of degree; they represent an alternative [sic] construction of sexuality and the body based on Daoist-informed ascetics, self-discipline, and the spiritual desire for transcendence and immortality as opposed to prevalent libertine pursuits centered on erotic pleasures and emotional attachments by merchants and literati alike." (Liu Xun 2009: 125.)

¹⁰⁴ Two of them representing "golden elixir sexual alchemy" proper in different stages, while two of them contain elements of alchemical discourse but seem to lack certain meaningful parts of the practice.

¹⁰⁵ Clarke Hudson writes, in academia.edu, he is preparing a book based on the dissertation: a sociological study of a Yuan-dynasty sexual alchemist, Chen Zhixu, which applies theories, methods, principles, and case studies from Pierre Bourdieu. However, Hudson has not published anything since 2012. It seems he has left the academia altogether, for reasons unknown to me.

Ilia Mozias, in *The Literati path to Immortality - The Alchemical Teachings of Lu Xixing* (2020), argues for an alternative representation of Lu Xixing. As Lu Xixing has traditionally been viewed as a representative of the yin-yang branch, and his writings have been interpreted as such by most scholars, Mozias *claims for the opposite*. He challenges previous scholars' conceptions based on a systematic examination of Lu Xixing's life, teaching, and practices, mainly from a sinological perspective. He admits, that Lu followed many ideas of Chen Zhixu, as well as his interpretations of *Cantong qi* and *Wuzhen pian*, and was inspired by other authors associated with the yin-yang branch, such as Weng Baoguang. He also admits that Lu Xixing inspired many late imperial practitioners of yin-yang dual cultivation. Despite this, he quite interestingly argues that Lu Xixing, as an autodidact having learned *neidan* through literature and the praxis of spirit-writing, used sexual alchemy related terminology only metaphorically, and, although surely had thoroughly ruminated the practice, opted in his own system for a solo-interpretation, in which the "outer medicine" was obtained *not* through ritualized intercourse, but through breathing techniques.

The arts of the bedroom generally had gained a suspicious reputation by the Song dynasty (960–1279), and its critique increased in literature (Liu Xun 2009b: 123; Liu Ts'un-yan 1976: 203–205). Several *neidan* masters published classifications of "side-door" (*pangmen*) practices which were from their perspective *not neidan*, including ones which were considered morally deviant.¹⁰⁶ Probably the most refined and detailed classification was by Li Daochun (fl. 1288–1290) in *Zhonghe ji* (Anthology of Central Harmony) in which the lowest two grades of side-gates consisted essentially of sexual practices, indicating their moral deviance. (Yokote 2015: 1110; Hudson 2007: 361–366.).¹⁰⁷ Liu Xun writes, that in *neidan* writings before Ming two trends existed. The dominant trend ignored or confused any actual or perceived differences between the bedroom arts and *neidan* duo-cultivation, and since the Song, it had established a *moral censure of sexual cultivation as a rhetorical convention*. This was adopted by both proponents and opponents of duo-cultivation. Parallel to the dominant trend, however, a strand of dissent strained to affirm the distinction of dual cultivation from other sexual practices. (Liu Xun 2009b: 125.)

Neidan masters who applied sexual cultivation at certain stages of their teaching and practice, then, often engaged in apologetic discourse to distinguish their own practices from the bedchamber arts.¹⁰⁸ From their perspective such *other* practices were (represented as) vulgar and inferior. In the mainstream discourse, however, as well in the solo *neidan* discourse disapproving the usage of sexual techniques, duo *neidan* cultivation was commonly categorized in the same sack with the bedroom arts. A central moral issue in the eyes of general public was the perceived imbalance between the male and his often plural companions, in terms of energetic benefit for male.¹⁰⁹ The

¹⁰⁶ They were also "ineffective". These classifications may be read as rhetorically serving the function of lifting each author's own teachings to the fore.

¹⁰⁷ Hudson translates Li Daochun's classification in full.

¹⁰⁸ Such as "gathering and battling at the three peaks" (*sanfeng caizhan*), "the art of mounting women" (*yunü shu*) and so forth.

¹⁰⁹ This imbalance was at the same time structurally supported by the patriarchal society.

critique by the adherents of *neidan* solo-cultivation focused more on the efficacy of the practice: they disagreed on the fundamentals of alchemical practice based on the distinction of "prenatal" (*xiantian*) and "postnatal" (*houtian*). (Wile 1992: 16–17, 27–28; Hudson 2007; Liu Ts'un-yan 1976: 203; Liu Xun 2009b: 121–122.)

Whereas in the Song (960–1279) and Yuan (1260–1368) the sexual dual cultivation discourse was arguably veiled in cryptic terminology, like much of early *neidan*, and attacked apologetically against common men's sexual practices, the late Ming dual cultivation discourse became more open in its content. (Liu Xun 2009b: 123–125; Hudson 2007: 410–411.)¹¹⁰ The explicit works on *neidan* including sexual practices seem to date from Ming dynasty, and later.¹¹¹

Representation of Chen Zhixu (fl. 1329–1336) and his neidan. Early *neidan* was typically veiled in cryptic and allusive language, later by Ming, through a development of printing and popularization, *neidan* works became more available and accessible as guides for practice. Yuan dynasty alchemist Chen Zhixu's use of sexual metaphors has received highly variant readings even among the recent scholarship. Fabrizio Pregadio's entry on Chen Zhixu in the *Encyclopedia of Taoism* has the following:

Echoing his older contemporary, Li Daochun, and anticipating some *neidan* masters of the later period, especially Liu Yiming, Chen offers a radically spiritual interpretation of *neidan*. Instead of describing physiological practices, he repeatedly states that the essence of alchemy consists in recovering the Original Pneuma (*yuanqi*) of the state "prior to Heaven" within the state "subsequent to Heaven"; this recovery is said to happen "in one instant" (*qingke* 頃刻). (Pregadio 2008: 262–263.)

Pregadio also describes that along with integrating quotes of *Daode jing*, *Cantong qi*, *Wuzhen pian* and Buddhist texts to his Southern lineage doctrinal basis, Chen Zhixu advocated the unity of the Three Teachings arguing that Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism ultimately supported the *neidan* perspective. The *fabricated* nature of Chen Zhixu's "Quanzhen lineage" is recognized by Pregadio as well as Yokote Yutaka (2015),¹¹² though Yokote still calls Chen a Quanzhen master. Yokote writes that Chen Zhixu's *Shangyangzi Jindan dayao* represents a multifaceted overview of *neidan*, a summa of *neidan* of Song and Yuan. While he recognizes that the multiplicity of quotes in the work makes it somewhat hard to distinguish the peculiarities of Chen Zhixu's own thought, he says:

the main point that requires attention is that, in Chen Zhixu's view, the golden elixir should be refined on the basis of the "precelestial one breath" (*xiantian yiqi* 先天一氣), which is collected within the body. Importantly Chen Zhixu does not use discourses concerning the inner Nature [sic] in relation to this portion of the alchemical work. After this portion, however, he envisages a further stage that does not consist of Daoist *Neidan* practices: for this stage, the Chan Buddhist practices centered on the inner nature are indispensable. (...) he considers the golden elixir to be one's breath,

¹¹⁰ Late-Ming culture had become generally more open in sexual affairs due to social changes, particularly the rise of consumer culture and the spreading of merchants' libertine lifestyle to the literati class.

¹¹¹ Hudson (2007, 411–412) offers a list of texts in *Daozang* up to Ming possibly containing sexual alchemy.

¹¹² Yokote Yutaka, "Daoist Internal Alchemy – Tang Dynasty Daoist Practices and the Development of Internal Alchemy," (2015).

and in this respect he does not transmit the Early Quanzhen view that the golden elixir is equivalent to one's inner nature. His negative attitudes toward such practices as "causing [the essence of] metal to ascend by the back of the body" (*zhouhou feijin*) also suggests that his Neidan methods are not based on the system of the Zhong-Lü texts. (Yokote 2015: 1104–1105.)

One gets the impression of Chen Zhixu as a Quanzhen inspired teacher, who advocated collecting the elixir ingredient within the body—viewing the elixir as breath, therefore following the Southern lineage—but for later stages recommended Chan mental cultivation. Judith Boltz's (1986) representation is the earliest of the Western scholars, and has surely directly influenced most of these descriptions.¹¹³ Isabelle Robinet, in her *Encyclopedia* entry, repeats some of Boltz's account almost by word:

Chen Zhixu draws extensively on the *Daode jing*, the *Zhuangzi*, the *Wuzhen pian*, the *Yinfu jing*, the *Zhouyi cantong qi* and related works, and several Quanzhen masters. (...) Like Li Daochun, whom he frequently quotes, Chen considers the central point in *jindan* to be the intuitive recognition of one's precosmic and perennial inborn nature (*xing* 性), which he equates with the Buddha-nature (*foxing* 佛性 or *buddhatā*). (Robinet 2008: 557–558.)

Baldrian-Hussein's representation of Chen Zhixu follows on the same line with minor variations.¹¹⁴ What is striking in all of these accounts is that *none of them* make any mention of Chen Zhixu advocating *sexual paired practices*. Interestingly, in Chinese modern and pre-modern readers Chen Zhixu's work has mostly been read as representative of the sexual interpretation of *neidan* (Hudson 2007: 370). Robinet presents elsewhere (1995, 2011) an explicit doubt, if not outright denial, not only concerning Chen Zhixu practicing sexual dual cultivation, but sexual practices being part of *neidan altogether*. However, in her overall representation of *neidan* discourse, Robinet relies heavily on Chen Zhixu, along with other Song-Yuan authors. She does recognize that certain *neidan* authors (such as Weng Baoguang and also Chen Zhixu) have traditionally been read as proponents of sexual practices, but views the issue problematic: "The issue of sexual practices in Neidan is complicated by the fact that while these practices probably existed, this does not mean that the masters recommended them" (Robinet 2011: 77). She argues, among other things, that almost all the authors *explicitly reject* the use of sexual practices, and that Chen Zhixu's critique of

¹¹³ Boltz (1986) describes Chen Zhixu's *Jindan dayao* as a "comprehensive survey of the *chin-tan* [*jindan*] textual tradition according to his assimilation and critical analysis of centuries of writing on the subject." Chen acknowledges "his obligations to the heritage of Chang Po-tuan [Zhang Boduan], but he then identifies himself most emphatically as the direct heir of the Ch'uan-chen [Quanzhen] tradition conveyed by Master Chao Yu-ch'ien [Zhao Youqin] (fl. 1329). (...) While the influence of K'ung-tzu's [Confucius] teachings is also duly noted, Ch'en's focus overall falls on the natural affinity between the meditative practices of *chin-tan* [*jindan*] and Ch'an [Chan]. More specifically, he attempts to equate the *chin-tan* experience with the phenomenon of (...) the intuitive recognition of one's Buddha-nature, that is *buddhatā*. (...) In presenting his case through the media of both prose and verse, Ch'en draws extensively on Buddhist sources (...) But the foremost stimuli to his interpretations, Ch'en admits, are the writings of his Master Chao, a practitioner of Ch'an meditation in his own right." (Boltz 1986: 184–185.)

¹¹⁴ Baldrian-Hussein (2004) represents somewhat uncritically Chen Zhixu as belonging to an offshoot of Quanzhen lineage stemming from Ma Danyang, and writing that while Chen claims an adherence to uniting Three Teachings, Daoist and Chan influence tends to predominate. She notes the strong influence by the *Wuzhen pian* tradition, particularly Zhang Boduan and Bai Yuchan. Chen Zhixu's main work *Jindan dayao* "represents a harmonious concord between *xing* 性 (Chan) and *ming* 命 (Taoism). The entire work is theoretical, cryptic, and allusive—as Chen himself says, the text alone, without indications from a master, was of no use." The golden elixir is for him "the ineffable, all-embracing, immanent, and transcendental *qi* of 'Former Heaven'" and the way to attain it consists, strangely, "first in acquiring a thorough understanding of social rules, then in meditation resulting in wisdom." (Baldrian-Hussein 2004: 1180.)

bedroom arts (*"sanfeng caizhan"*) would clearly indicate opposition to sexual dual cultivation.¹¹⁵ But Robinet seems not to be too sensitive to the issue of the *rhetorics* involved, which are pointed out clearly later by both Hudson and Liu Xun. She does recognize that certain authors' rejection of sexual practices have by some been considered purely formal, but goes on to point the difficulty of distinguishing these from the rejections that are for real. Robinet, however, writes that it is "very probable, but not sure," that internal alchemy would have been practiced also on the sexual level. However, she prefers to take authors like Weng Baoguang and Chen Zhixu by their word, when they say, like the more obvious pure practitioners, that sexual metaphors in *neidan* should be taken as symbolical. (Robinet 1995: 48–50; 2011: 77–78.)

Hudson explicates the *rhetoric move* of the presumed exponents of sexual interpretation of *neidan* as rejecting only the ordinary bedroom arts (such as *sanfeng caizhan*, "triple-mound gathering"),¹¹⁶ but not the *neidan* application:

these texts are unmistakably teaching sexual alchemy, by Wile and anyone else who has studied them. Like Chen Zhixu, Lu Xixing and Sun Ruzhong reject "sanfeng caizhan" or "yunü shu" as heterodox sexual practice, distinguishing it from their own orthodox sexual practice. Because Lu and Sun were sexual alchemists who criticized "sanfeng caizhan," Robinet's argument that Chen Zhixu could not be a sexual alchemist simply because he criticizes "sanfeng caizhan" does not hold water. Known sexual alchemists and known critics of sexual alchemy alike both criticize "sanfeng caizhan," so criticism of "sanfeng caizhan" alone informs us only of the critics view of "sanfeng caizhan" or at least his public position on this issue, and does not inform us of the critics view of sexual alchemy. (Hudson 2007: 375–376.)

As noted above, similar rhetoric on behalf of the late Ming dual cultivators is pointed out by Liu Xun (2009b). Hudson (2007; 782 pages) spends considerable effort to argue that Chen Zhixu's *neidan* contained an essentially sexual component, as traditionally indicated, and that Chen in his writings consistently followed this way of interpretation. In Hudson's reading Chen Zhixu's *neidan* discourse was thoroughly sexual, not only on certain occasions, although he admittedly taught solo meditation to some of his students. Hudson argues that Chen Zhixu was not in any meaningful way an adherent of Quanzhen, rather it was a convenient, and common, *strategy* to claim a Quanzhen connection. What comes to Buddhism, "Chen's claims to Chan Buddhist and Quanzhen Daoist authority should be seen together, since both are examples of his general strategies of 'extension' (establishing correspondences between his *dao* and other known truths) and 'stealing the lightning' (appropriating the authority of traditional scriptures, while asserting the superiority of esoteric exegesis)" (Hudson 2007: 85). He proposes that much of Chen's language and quotations

¹¹⁵ Despite this, what Robinet writes of Chen Zhixu's perspective sounds rather what one would expect an adherent of sexual dual cultivation to propose: "In his commentary to the *Wuzhen pian*, Chen Zhixu also clarifies that the External Medicine is found within the world of forms (*sexiang*) and pertains to the breath of the life force (*ming*). The Internal Medicine, instead, occurs naturally within oneself and never outside oneself; it pertains to the 'true nature' (*xing*) and to the essence (*jing*)." (Robinet 2011: 88.) Robinet addresses the Chinese scholar Li Yuanguo, who relates the medicines to sexual practices, saying: "In his view, the External Medicine (*waiyao*) would be gathered by a man from a woman during sexual intercourse. Li Yuanguo bases himself on the commentaries to the *Wuzhen pian* (Awakening to Reality) by Weng Baoguang and by Chen Zhixu (also known as Shangyang zi), respectively dating from the twelfth and the fourteenth centuries. Li Yuanguo's interpretation is unwarranted..." (Robinet 2011: 77–78.)

¹¹⁶ A form of sexual practice, where male sucks the sexual essences of a female from the "three peaks" of mouth, breasts, and the genitals to nourish his own vitality.

on the Three Teachings was a *purposeful* rhetoric *misreading* of classics in order to affirm the place of his own more marginal sexual alchemical teaching. Hudson reads Chen Zhixu as a marginal teacher in a competitive market of spiritual marketplace, managing his own mastership and authority, while also striving for personal salvation. From passages around Chen Zhixu's main writings and applying a firm interpretive angle Hudson assembles a speculative description of an actual practice sequence in which the center stage in terms of meaning and complicity is gained by the gathering of the outer medicine from the female partner. Despite revealing Chen Zhixu's strategies critically and I think convincingly, generally Hudson yet manages to maintain respect and understanding for Chen Zhixu's genuine religious endeavour and his remarkable influence in the history of *neidan*.¹¹⁷

Pregadio in his recent anthology of translations of *neidan* texts (2019: 183) admits to Chen Zhixu's teaching containing sexual practice in its repertoire.¹¹⁸ Pregadio's perspective has softened, but he seems to indicate, that while Chen Zhixu's *neidan* indeed contained sexual conjunction, Chen should not be termed as a sexual alchemist as such; accordingly, describing his *neidan* as "sexual alchemy" would be a misrepresentation of his teaching when considering it as a whole.¹¹⁹ Thus, Hudson's perspective, based on the first in-depth-study on Chen Zhixu, negates the Quanzhen or Chan oriented representations in previous Western scholarship, and affirms the portrayal of Chen Zhixu as an early representative of sexual dual cultivation, with meticulously detailed argumentation. This is a bold move against the preceding statements of established Western scholars, representing the third research program, and probably also threatening this paradigm through its approach. It seems their word and position on the field has yet outweighed the thorough and challenging presentation of Hudson. *Jindan dayao* seems symbolical and allusive text allowing for interpretations. Chen Zhixu is partially also quite explicit in his prose, but intentionally veils his meanings. Viewing at the different readings one wonders what interpretations go too far from the text, what is the amount of speculation one should allow. Chen Zhixu's text may be read in a fairly "innocent" way, as Pregadio's translation and Robinet's perspective shows. But if one starts to trace hints for a different, sexual reading, more and more begins to appear as what one is searching for. This is of course an issue of theory-ladenness of observation. Also a strive for concrete explication, and wholeness of narrative, when not given, may drive to overt

¹¹⁷ While Hudson embeds his reading of Chen Zhixu in sociological theory, which may make Chen Zhixu's intentions sound questionable, it should be noted that these frameworks would probably make any individual efforts sound that way as they are observed in a context of social struggle.

¹¹⁸ "As a representative of the 'Yin-Yang' branch (*yinyang pai*), his *Neidan* includes sexual conjunction among its practices, a feature that was emphasized by later exponents of the same trend and has lead some Western scholars to call him a 'sexual alchemist' (a term that has no correspondence in Chinese)" (Pregadio 2019: 183). Here Pregadio clearly addresses Wile, and perhaps particularly Hudson.

¹¹⁹ Here I'm partially basing myself on personal communication in October 2020. In Robinet's case it comes necessarily to mind that her conception of "true *neidan*" leans so much on Chen Zhixu, that it would have surely threatened too much the enterprise as a whole, if his approach would have been accepted as sexual alchemy.

conclusions.¹²⁰ While Hudson's interpretations feel fresh and concrete, one may ask to which amount certain interpretive frameworks drive toward certain types of answers, because these conclusions may to some extent be in-built in these interpretive models.

Discussion. Two somewhat opposing strands of scholarly interpretation and perspective emerge. Wile, followed by Hudson, stand on one side. Robinet, Pregadio, Baldrian-Hussein, and Boltz stand on the other side. Liu Xun, Liu Ts'un-yan, and also Despeux, seem to take a more moderate, less polemical ground somewhere in between, representing a history-oriented perspective. These opposing strands have, I say, their particular perceptions on certain aspects of *neidan*, and while not uniform, they uphold certain stances. In what regard do these perspectives differ from the beginning? Do the perspectives illustrated by Robinet ("spiritual, structural") and Wile ("corporeal, practical") stand for different sorts of research programs and different conceptions of *neidan*? Robinet et al. locate to the "discourse and doctrine" program, and Wile, bordering *neidan* studies, may be located to an initial phase of the "multidisciplinary" program, which Hudson represents. They stand for different models for answering questions like what is it that scholars want to know from reading these sources, what kinds of answers are they looking for, and what is the research interest for scholarly inquiry. Some of the most fascinating and enlightening things to read among academic publications are review articles and their responses. It so happened that Douglas Wile wrote in 1997 a critical review of Robinet's 1995 book on internal alchemy,¹²¹ to which Robinet responded (1998). This discussion is quite revealing in terms of critique as well as what is considered interesting.

Wile's interest seems to be to understand the texts as instructions for certain practices containing physical and meditational components. He is interested in the texts as practical hands-on guides which may be veiled, but possible to decipher. For him the texts are the means for transmitting practices. And these practices are performed for a purpose, which Wile terms "biologic" or "etheric immortality." Wile is oriented through literary studies, like Robinet, but he asks for a certain grounding for the texts, a perspective of lived reality, and religiosity. He asks, ideally at least, for historical, sociological, anthropological contexts: who are the *men* that write these texts?¹²² Criticizing Robinet, he asks: "Is contemporary scholarship content with one-dimensional appraisals of intellectual activity in a social and psychological vacuum?" and "are these how-to books, or just, as Robinet says, 'another mode of thought'?" (Wile 1997: 88–89). Representing perspectives of intellectual history and cultural studies, Wile is yet not quite content for analyzing self-content thought world only: "In order to get past our own 'orientalist' fascination

¹²⁰ As Robinet noted concerning Needham, his "conclusions are at times somewhat hasty", or more precisely "Needham's positivist spirit pushes him too often to regrettable misunderstandings, analogous to his claim that a text such as the *Huangqi yangjing jing* (Scripture of the Yellow Breath and the Yang Essence) teaches the practice of "heliotherapy," while it deals with meditations on the Sun and the Moon that can be performed in the shade of a room" (Robinet 2011: 76–77).

¹²¹ *Introduction à l'alchimie intérieure taoïste.*

¹²² Although his own major study (1992) may have lacked just some of the same aspects.

with exotic systems of thought, we need to know the real world of the Chinese inner alchemists and what their wives thought about all this.” (Ibid: 91.)

Robinet’s approaches the texts—I would say, as a structuralist—as containing in themselves a world of symbols, the function of which “is simply to indicate that the whole discourse is nothing but symbolic,” (ibid: 89)¹²³ an understanding of which a researcher may grasp if the texts are given due time and effort. The texts represent for her the means of transmission of a way of perceiving the world differently, allowing illumination almost of themselves, a state which is “completely other than corporal immortality or psychological well-being” and “not something that will only come in the future or that must be attained elsewhere” (Robinet 1998: 147–148.) The different practices (physiological, contemplative) may support this process but for her they play a secondary role.¹²⁴ Robinet views that, for the authors she has studied, this “infinitely secrete and intimate” ultimate mover is beyond time and space and “more real than would-be immortality, even corporal immortality, which is, after all, something that has to be gained in a hypothetical time” (Robinet 1998: 147). Interpreting these texts too concretely, literally, or reducing them to social facts seem to violate their lofty quality. She is unwilling to explicate certain assumptions, such as treating one’s subject as if the medium were the message (Wile 1997: 92), taken for granted in her approach. However, the participants in the endless *neidan* dialogue of repetition “do remain in our human world, and they stress that this human world is their parting and ending point, that it is their springboard, *hic et nunc*, now and forever.” (Robinet 1998: 148.) She tends to represent *neidan* in its most refined form as represented by chosen authors such as Li Daochun, unitary, and beyond the terror of history.¹²⁵

5.3 Theme two: female alchemy

Literature review. Female alchemy, *nüdan*, is a form of internal alchemy for women. One of the earliest references to *neidan* practices for women is found in Xue Daoguang’s (1078?–1191) commentary to *Wuzhen pian*, but the sources for women’s alchemical practices can be traced to the texts on sexual techniques, the bedroom arts (*fangzhong shu*). Glimpses of an emerging *nüdan* appear in the Song (960–1279), Yuan (1260–1368) and Ming (1368–1644) dynasties. A *neidan* literature specifically devoted to women, however, developed only between the end of the Ming and the beginning of the Qing (1644–1911) dynasty, and continued to appear through mediumistic spirit writing throughout the Qing. The general principles of *nüdan* are identical to those of *neidan*,

¹²³ Wile translates Robinet (1995: 98) here.

¹²⁴ Robinet also notes, that even in French, several books had already been published on aspects of physiological practices of *neidan*. Her intention is “to highlight an aspect of *neidan* that the texts themselves heavily underline, but which seems to be somewhat neglected in these other works.” (Robinet 1998: 146.)

¹²⁵ I’m referring to an Eliadean position of “history of religions,” which disregards historicity and change in favor of looking for the “essence” of religion, an unchanging true quality of religion behind historical manifestations. While such claim may be too much to say, there is a taste of such tendency.

but there are some differences which reflect women's physical constitution and the presumed female character. (Komjathy 2013: 220–221; Esposito 2008: 778.) *Niudan* has been addressed by Catherine Despeux, Douglas Wile, Monica Esposito, Elena Valussi, Sara Neswald, Liu Xun, and Louis Komjathy. With fairly little disagreement concerning the female practice itself, the discussion has centered on socio-historical context and the interests in which this practice is embedded. Therefore, the contextualization and understanding of the historical circumstances for the emergence of *niudan* may be identified as a "debate" to a degree, and will be discussed in greater detail.

Catherine Despeux was the first to write extensively about women's alchemical practice in a Western language.¹²⁶ Her thematic work *Immortelles de la Chine ancienne – Taoïsme et alchimie féminine* (1990), with a focus on immortal women, contains a large section describing and analyzing *niudan* through its textual body, and situating it in the historical and religious context. Presenting a wealth of primary materials on the topic, it is the basis for any research on *niudan* (Valussi 2003: 42). Despeux describes the development of *niudan* literature in late Ming and early Qing, the female alchemical body with its special characteristics, and *niudan* practice in three main stages, formulated as: "decapitation of the red dragon," "embryonic breathing," and "ascent to the empyrean." It serves as the foundation, with some expansion and clarification of stages, for the part three "Women's Transformation" in *Women in Daoism* (2003) by Despeux and Livia Kohn. Valussi (2004: 208) notes a lack of attention to the social relevance of the tradition and the development of historical reasons for its emergence. *Pratiques des femmes taoïstes – Méditation et alchimie intérieure* (2013) gives a lengthy introduction to the practice, principles, and textual history of *niudan*, and translates in French four works translated by Douglas Wile to English, with the addition of some three texts.¹²⁷ Apart from the fresh translations and some updated contents mainly from a practice perspective and directed to a general audience, this *niudan* anthology seems to reproduce the parts concerning *niudan* practice in Despeux's earlier work (1990). It describes in detail the practices to stop menstruation ("decapitating the red dragon"), reviving the menses that have stopped due to menopause, massaging breasts, and other central aspects of female practices. The book seems to encourage the reader for practice of this kind.

Douglas Wile's *Art of the Bedchamber – Chinese Sexual Yoga Classics Including Women's Solo Meditation Texts* (1992) translates in English four texts on female alchemy practice, without further contextualization, to illustrate how they "underscore the critical role of sexual energy in

¹²⁶ Needham & Lu (1983: 237–240) were actually the first to briefly discuss *niudan* in Western scholarship, through the texts of Min Yide. The historical conditions and questions of emergence of these works are left as vague notions.

¹²⁷ These previously untranslated texts are *Niujindan* (Female Golden Elixir), *Kundao gongfu cidi* (Stages of Alchemical Work on the Way of the Female), and *Taiyin lianxing ge* (Songs of Sublimating the Constitution of the Supreme Yin).

Chinese meditation” (Wile 1992: 192).¹²⁸ Two of the texts translated by Wile were also translated in French in Monica Esposito’s dissertation “La Porte du Dragon – L’école Longmen du mont Jingai et ses pratiques alchimiques d’après le Daozang Xubian (Suite au Canon Taoïste),” which in addition to introducing these texts, also gives an overview of *nüdan* (1993: 280–374). Developing the insights of the dissertation part, Esposito’s “Beheading the Red Dragon: The Heart of Feminine Alchemy”¹²⁹ gives some clear perspectives on the practice of “beheading the red dragon” as a foundational and preliminary practice to develop the storage of original essence as *materia prima* for the alchemical work and comparing it to the male practice.¹³⁰

Elena Valussi’s dissertation “Beheading the Red Dragon: A History of Female Inner Alchemy in China” (2003) forms the basis for her broad scope of later research articles related to *nüdan* texts. Her treatment covers the whole body of texts appearing in several collections, and her main argument is that the emergence of a specific literature on *nüdan* should be seen as a reflection of tightening moral concern on women’s religious activity during Ming and Qing. Thus *nüdan* literature not only details the specifics of women’s practice (differing from men mainly at the first or preliminary stage), but legitimizes the practice as the one appropriate for women, and thus secures women at the inner quarters of the household practicing “safely” at paternal care. Although women’s practice is generally said to equal men’s at the later stages, women are framed lower as they cannot reach the final departure to heavens without mercy of the gods, unlike men who can ascend at their own initiative. Some of Valussi’s later articles deepen and develop the various aspects present in her dissertation.

In “Rhetorical voices in the *neidan* tradition: an interdisciplinary analysis of the *Nüdan hebian* (pref. 1906) compiled by He Longxiang (fl. 1900-1906)” (2007), Sara Neswald explores the diverse knowledge bases and changing attitudes towards religion and embodiment within *nüdan* related discourses of *Nüdan hebian*, the publication of which is situated in Eastern Sichuan at the turn of the twentieth century. Her work centers on drawing out the multivocality of discourse and practice, dispelling the idea of a single and coherent practice of *nüdan* that would extend to all groups and speak in any one voice. Neswald identifies within *Nüdan hebian* three major groupings of tracts and links them to different systems of knowledge, sources of local knowledge as well as a range of practices. She points that as alternative women’s roles emerged, instead of challenging or

¹²⁸ These are *Xiawangmu nüxiu zhengtu shize* (Ten Rules from the Queen Mother of the West on the Proper Path of Female Cultivation), *Nü jindan fayao* (Essential Methods of Female Golden Elixir), *Niwan Li zushi nüzhong shuangxiu baofa* (Precious Raft of Female Dual Cultivation According to Master Li Niwan), and *Nügong zhengfa* (Correct Methods for Women’s Practice). Wile’s reading was criticized quite fiercely by some researchers, especially those who seem to implicitly rely on the solo cultivation discourse and more abstract interpretation of the *neidan* process.

¹²⁹ Reprinted in the posthumous *Facets of Qing Daoism*, 2014, pp. 223–237.

¹³⁰ Esposito clarifies that while talking about “blood,” focus of practice is the celestial water (*tianguì*), a synonym for the original *qi* (*yuangqi*), marking the apex of *qi*, and serving as a reservoir of energy to be tapped. The process of menstrual bleeding is also called *rengui*, in which the term *ren* denotes the moment of gathering the precelestial medicine before *gui*, that in turn indicates the actual menstrual flow. The stopping of menses corresponds to stopping the seminal flow in men, and is a preliminary practice, equal to what is in the standard model known as “laying the foundations” (*zhujì*). It also corresponds to the break in menstruation during pregnancy, as the alchemical process is envisioned as a process of gestation of a spiritual body or self within. Following the flow of creation gives birth to a child, while going against it makes for immortality.

rejecting the underlying premises that position women (*yin*) under the control of men (*yang*), they chose sometimes to simply ignore them, creating a genuine space for their own religious practice. While skillful in textual treatment, Neswald makes some mistakes on the level of understanding *neidan* theory and practice.

The extant *niidan* texts are a relatively conceivable body of writings: thirty to forty works of uneven length, in prose and poetry.¹³¹ Four major centers with different compilers can be distinguished. 1) Min Yide (1758–1836) edited books that contained two *niidan* texts in Mount Jin'gai in Jiangsu province, where he resided as patriarch of a Longmen sub-sect.¹³² His master Shen Yibing (1708–1786) received teachings from the mysterious sage Li Niwan through spirit-communication. 2) Centered around the Qingyang Temple, six *niidan* texts were edited by Fu Jinquan (1765–1845) and published at Shudong shancheng tang (Hall of completing good in Eastern Sichuan),¹³³ and fourteen were edited and published by He Longxiang (fl. 1900–1906) at Erxian'an monastery in Chengdu, Sichuan province.¹³⁴ 3) Yi Xinying (1896–1976) served as supervisor of the Tianshi dong in Mount Qingcheng in Sichuan assembling about ten *niidan* texts.¹³⁵ 4) Chen Yingning (1880–1969) headed the Institute for Immortal Learning in Shanghai and edited five *niidan* texts with added commentary, and a journal with a wide circulation. In addition to these, there are two texts written by Liu Yiming (1734–1821), and several others, listed in Valussi 2003. (Kohn & Despeux 2011: 203–208; Despeux 1990: 163–170; Valussi 2003: 121, 127–133, 151–153, 181–187, 212–213.)

A genuine empowerment of women or a counter-revolutionary discourse? *Niidan* literature emerged throughout the Qing dynasty approximately between 1744–1896.¹³⁶ With some exceptions this body of literature was produced in spirit-writing séances on various altars. During the centuries the texts went through several editorial hands, editing and re-editing the text, writing prefaces, deleting prefaces by immortals, renaming, but mainly leaving the content itself untouched. (Valussi 2008: 159–160.) One of these editorial hands were those of Chen Yingning (1880–1969). An influential modern lay Daoist practitioner teaching and writing in republican Shanghai in the first part of twentieth century, he transmitted Daoism and *neidan* into the modern discourse. Similarly, he transmitted female cultivation methods to his contemporary practitioners, in a context of women's emancipation. But not simply transmitting, he was centrally reformulating the tradition. The ideologies of nationalism, science, and gender played important roles in transcribing and re-editing the traditional Daoist teachings into modern values, language, and scientific concepts. (Liu Xun 2009: 273–276; Valussi 2008: 181–187.) Basically, Chen Yingning did what many *neidan* authors

¹³¹ Despeux 1990 lists altogether forty texts by name in her appendix, 291–302.

¹³² In *Daozang xubian* (Sequel to the Daoist Canon).

¹³³ *Niujindan fayao* (Essentials of the practice of female alchemy).

¹³⁴ *Niudan hebian* (Collection of Female Alchemy).

¹³⁵ *Niizi daojiao congshu* (Collection of Daoist Writings for Women).

¹³⁶ Preface of *Qingjing yuanjun Kunyuan jing* is from 1744, but it may date as far as before 1680. See Valussi 2003: 139–141.

throughout history have done: re-reading and re-interpreting old texts and making textual sources serve their own and contemporary concerns.¹³⁷ Sara Neswald addresses some of the previous Western scholarly positions toward *nüdan*, and estimates that

A whole generation of western scholars was introduced to Chen's [Yingning] gender-equal conceptualization of the *neidan* phenomenon; Chen's interpretations profoundly affect Despeux's interpretation of women's alchemy (Despeux 1990), and his *Nüdan xiao congshu* formed the basis for Thomas Cleary's *Immortal Sisters* (Cleary 1989). Chen's influential reinterpretation of the tradition has led some scholars to read *neidan* as a gender-equal tradition offering women equal access to *sotis*, promoting gender-equal symbolism, and operating under a relatively gender-equal attitude regarding access to the tools of and opportunities for *neidan* practice. It is this assumption Valussi challenges in her 2003 dissertation. Valussi argues that the term *nüdan* itself is misogynistic; a term employed merely to defeat and delimit women's access to *neidan sotis*, *neidan* tools, and its associated opportunities. (Neswald 2007: 66.)

Valussi (2003) herself mentions particularly an article by Laughlin and Wong (1999), two contemporary Daoist practitioners,¹³⁸ and takes this text as a point of departure:¹³⁹

Recently, Karen Laughlin and Eva Wong (1999) have discussed female alchemy in light of feminist discourse, especially notions of female language and agency, and found that, as a phenomenon, it accorded women a voice and a tool to practice. I take aim at this interpretation of *nüdan*, simply because there is not enough evidence of the degree of input that women themselves had in the production of female alchemy manuals, and to what extent these manuals, collected and edited by men, were giving women a tool to free themselves or just a safer religious practice to carry on at home. (Valussi 2003: 59–60.)

Valussi argues decisively *against* the emergence of Qing *nüdan* literature as gender-equal. While Laughlin & Wong's perspective was not all one-sided, in my view, their presentation is lacking on a fundamental historical level.¹⁴⁰ Also Chinese scholars have presented gender-equal interpretations of *nüdan*.¹⁴¹ Valussi takes a firm stand against scholarly positions that represent *nüdan* as a relatively unchanging doctrine and practice which would serve, unquestioned, as a means for women's empowerment, describing such approaches as "fairly ahistorical." They try to describe *nüdan* as something extending to history, but which in its essence, lies somewhere beyond the reach of history and change. Valussi therefore positions herself as a historian against essentialist stances, and calls for critical estimation of the historical and social conditions that led to the

¹³⁷ Chen Yingning's Daoist career is studied in depth by Liu Xun (2001, 2009).

¹³⁸ Eva Wong, along with Thomas Cleary, is the second main translator of *neidan* texts in popular format, though her books contain more accurate historical contextualization than those of Cleary.

¹³⁹ Although the article appeared in an academic publication, it does not seem to quite follow appropriate scholarly standards, particularly in terms of Daoist studies. This is my estimation.

¹⁴⁰ While Laughlin & Wong do represent in detail various perspectives of feminist theory and discuss the possibilities of "sharing between feminism and Daoism," they hold a perspective on Daoism as something ultimate and all-embracing. This is a religious ("theological") position.

¹⁴¹ Valussi addresses some of these: "Zhan Shichuang 1990 praises the achievements of women within Daoism, and Daoism for being a women-friendly tradition. Li Suping 2004 praises *nüdan* as a liberating practice for women. Both books position the beginning of *nüdan* in the Yuan period, because several texts of *nüdan* are—apocryphally—attributed to the Immortal Sun Bu'er 嵒秦性 (1119–1183). Both books present a fairly ahistorical perspective of Daoism as very beneficial to women, and describe *nüdan* as a fixed, stable and unshifting cultural phenomenon as well as a tool for women's self-assertion. This perspective does not take into account the historical origins and the process of transformation of the tradition that is so evident if we look at the prefaces and at the paratext in general." (Valussi 2009: 49.)

emergence of *niidan* literature, and also how the tradition has changed, how the texts have been used to serve various purposes through practices of editing and "paratext."

Monica Esposito, in her *Encyclopedia of Taoism* entry, does not address the emergence of *niidan* literature nor actively question its representation as an expression of gender-equality. She writes that "Beheading the Red Dragon in inner alchemy for women provides therefore full control over time and body—as does the control of seminal essence in masculine alchemy—since it is the emblem of mastery of passions and of all 'emotional and discursive outflows'", and that following the same three-stage process as for men the female practitioner "gains access to the stage of convergence of all contraries, in which there is no longer any distinction between practices for men and women. The *niidan* texts describe a woman deprived of sexual attributes and endowed with androgynous body; the retraction of breasts corresponds the retraction of testicles in man" (Esposito 2008: 779). She notes that the instructions are couched with reminders of qualities expected from morally responsible women. Although Esposito recognizes the presumed impure nature of menstrual blood in need of purification and sublimation, her description gives an impression more of female empowerment through the practice, equal and comparable to that of male. Her focus of inquiry seems to be more to understand the practice from its "own logic" than to analyze it critically or to explain it from outside in sociological or other terms. In this regard her approach is similar to that of Despeux.

Despeux's research interest centers detailing the psycho-physiological practices, representations of the body, Chinese medicine, and her approach is mostly sinological. Despeux perceives the emergence of *niidan* mainly in positive terms and female empowerment. *Women in Daoism* describes the roles of "Daoist women" as generally complex in the context of Confucian patriarchal, patrilineal, patrilocal society, in which women were seen as inferior, female infanticide was common and women were controlled through foot-binding. Men determined the training and treatment of their daughters, were able to mistreat and divorce their wives at will, and shunned widows as outcasts and socially useless. While Daoism reflected normatively the common societal vision of women of Confucian culture, it also enabled social alternatives in which women could "pursue their own goals as independent agents" (Despeux & Kohn 2003: 5). Instead of being defined only in relations to men, in religious practice the female identity could be expanded to include a greater ontological concern with inner states and cosmic attainment, and the female body would become the material basis for spiritual refinement. (Wang 2003: 70–71.)¹⁴² Instead of consistently considered equal to *yang*, *yin* is often also associated with qualities such as impurity, darkness, menace, and danger, lesser qualities which are then socially attached to women.¹⁴³ Women are considered impure, with their menstrual blood being unclean and polluting. Cessation of the menses, by "beheading the red dragon," is then regarded as a form of purification. Despeux

¹⁴² In contrast to male projections of idealized Daoist women, most ordinary women would simply participate in the conservative and "a domestic religion" with mostly practical and social concerns. (Despeux & Kohn: 244–246.)

¹⁴³ In Daoist contexts women are always related to *yin*, men to *yang*, and in all cases *yin* is considered complementary to *yang*.

recognizes these positions and posits that, after this first stage, women were also considered in a position of relative advantage in *neidan*, as they possess a womb, have naturally nurturing quality, a nature embracing stillness, and the "pearl of dew" already within them. Despeux does not really seem to acknowledge certain inherent unequal positions in *nüdan*.¹⁴⁴ In her view women had indeed to struggle to free themselves of societal constraints in order to follow the path of cultivation, but that *nüdan* practice could then enable them to remain celibate and not give birth to male children. (Despeux 2000: 401–402.) But who actually were the women that practiced *nüdan* in pre-modern China? Were they healthy young females in reproductive age and socially well positioned, as Despeux seems to presume? Or were they more likely to be menopausal women who had already fulfilled their duties in a Confucian-ordered social structure?

Valussi (2003; 485 pages) does not directly challenge Despeux 1990, but her study may be regarded as a response to these earlier publications, including Despeux. Valussi sets her task in situating critically the social and historical context for the emergence of these texts, and analyzing their underlying *ideology*. She brings in a critical apparatus of feminist theory, and points out discursive processes which, rather than revolutionize or threaten the established patriarchal order, express a concern for women having too much liberties at the time of emergence of these texts, and offer *nüdan* techniques in order to maintain the prevailing structures of power. A central site to look at these discursive procedures are the prefaces to the textual collections, observed by both Valussi (2003, 2008) and Neswald (2007), and regarded as "paratext." Paratext refers to editorial practices and the ways of contextualizing the actual textual contents and thus making it serve various intentions.¹⁴⁵ While the content of *nüdan* texts remained basically the same, this pool of texts was "appropriated by different genres of texts as well as influenced by different social and historical developments" (Valussi 2008: 160).¹⁴⁶

Valussi separates five stages in the development of *nüdan* tradition. The first stage is exemplified by texts by physicians, Fu Shan (1606–1684) and Cao Heng (ca. 1632). Not yet reflecting a self-aware *nüdan* tradition, their target audience was not specifically women. In the second stage (1750–1850) texts surface around China mainly in connection to spirit-writing séances, a more coherent portrayal of the tradition emerges. Chastity and proper moral behavior are central in these texts, exemplified by Liu Yiming's and Min Yide's *neidan* collections with some *nüdan* texts, and the first *nüdan* collection,¹⁴⁷ received and edited by Fu Jinquan. In the third stage,

¹⁴⁴ Such as having to become first like a male by "cultivating their form," in order to begin *neidan* in the same terms as men, or having to wait for salvation in the final stage because of their *yin* nature.

¹⁴⁵ By the time of Chen Yingning, *nüdan* had within two or three centuries shifted from a gender specific health promoting practice (medical texts) to a way to immortality for women (Min Yide, Liu Yiming), to an antidote for women's excessive involvement in outside activities (specifically religious sexual practices) (Fu Jinquan, He Longxian), to an empowering tool for women (Chen Yingning) who were just discovering their new place and space in society. (Valussi 2008b: 184.)

¹⁴⁶ "...these differing results have not been achieved by interventions on the texts themselves, but rather through the use of different editorial interventions on the paratext. These strategies include the replacement of earlier prefaces with new ones, the deleting of information about the place and mode of origin of the texts, the changing of titles, and the rearranging, excision and exchange of texts within the collections." (Valussi 2008: 160)

¹⁴⁷ *Nüjindan fayao* (Essential Methods for the Female Golden Elixir, 1813).

the authority of the editors becomes primary.¹⁴⁸ Reorganized according to a principle of rationality, and internal inconsistencies removed, the original message behind the production of these texts is reshaped to serve other ideologies. This stage is exemplified by the 1906 collection *Nüdan hebian* edited by He Longxiang, and by the 1936 collection *Nüzi daoxue xiao congshu wuzhong* edited by Chen Yingning.¹⁴⁹ The fourth stage (1980–1999) is exemplified by *Nüdan jicui*, published in 1989, and *Nüdan hebian xuanzhu* from 1991,¹⁵⁰ here texts are republished as medical self-help tools with religious origins completely deleted. The fifth stage, in which the tradition has been reappropriated as a spiritual one, has become apparent in the first decade of this century. (Valussi 2008: 159–160; Valussi 2014: 204–205.) Now, while these texts have been used in the context of women’s emancipation, especially by Chen Yingning, it is the second stage, which concerns the actual emergence of specific *nüdan* texts and continues to the third stage with He Longxiang’s collection including new texts and repeating some of the earlier concerns. Summing up various possible interpretive frameworks and the historical developments of the time, leading to the emergence of *nüdan*, Valussi states that with

the increasing availability of written texts in most households, the spread of literacy to women of higher classes, and women’s increasingly active involvement in religious activities, we could read the birth of this tradition as a welcome development that takes into account the differences of the female physiology from the male and the different social needs of women. We could read it as a development that followed what was happening in the Chinese medical field where women’s medicine (*fuke* 婦科)—with its attention to problems of gestation, pregnancy, postpartum, and menstrual regularity—was already well established. We could read it as a response to a request from women who, since they were very active in other cultural areas, had a desire to follow a spiritual path tailored for them. (Valussi 2014: 207.)

While these interpretations are accurate to some extent, Valussi convincingly shows that there were also other forces at work. These had likely more to do with maintaining the *status quo* of the patriarchy, which had become threatened.¹⁵¹ Female chastity and women’s proper moral conduct became a great concern under the Manchu Qing dynasty, and women’s increased involvement in the religious field was conceived a problem, particularly for the male heads of the family, says Valussi. The prefaces to the *nüdan* texts and collections insist that there is a lack for texts for women’s practice, and therefore only few women can practice internal alchemy. Confined in the inner quarters, the texts say, women have no chance to meet teachers and also no discernment between good and bad teachers, or right and wrong practices. *Nüdan* is then represented as a safe, controllable, and a manageable female practice, which would not take women away from home or

¹⁴⁸ Instead of the immortals who were originally conceived to have transmitted them.

¹⁴⁹ *Nüdan hebian* (Collection of Female Alchemy); *Nüzi daoxue xiao congshu wuzhong* (Small Encyclopedia in Five Books on the Female Learning of the Dao).

¹⁵⁰ *Nüdan jicui* (Selection of the Best Texts on Female Alchemy); *Nüdan hebian xuanzhu* (Annotated Selections from the *Nüdan Hebian*).

¹⁵¹ "...if we pay attention to the historical moment in which this tradition emerged, and to the discourse elaborated on in the prefaces, we could also read it as a way to forcibly divide men and women practitioners and to confine women and their practice to the safety of the home; this would eliminate the need for women to seek spiritual instruction outside the home and in the company of men, as this was perceived to be problematic." (Valussi 2014: 207.)

expose them to improper influences. Valussi questions the actual intent of the male editors. Were they responding to a real need expressed by women themselves?¹⁵² Or should they be read as normative documents, a worried response to religious activities deemed dangerous and in which women were already engaging? (Valussi 2014: 208.) What were these claimed dangerous activities, then? While earlier prefaces only hint at them, He Longxiang, the editor of *Nüdan hebian*, describes these *presumed* activities and women who engage in them in most detail, and not too surprisingly, they concern sexual activities, often related to dual cultivation practices. (Valussi 2008: 180.)¹⁵³

Valussi discusses how various types of "lewd women" are exemplified in contrast to the women of appropriate ideal moral conduct, who consult the male head of the family for instructions to female cultivation practices conducted safely at home. She believes that the emergence of *nüdan* indeed simultaneously denotes the necessity of creating a female sphere of activities in the religious field, where the woman was the central actor, as well as a spiritual modality for women that would be safe and controllable. But on deeper level *nüdan* texts and practices reflect anxieties over women's public religious activities and desire to contain them. (Valussi 2014: 202.) Elaborating these points slightly more in detail, she finds that by

reducing the female body to a body that has to be drained, the writers reveal their fears of pollution; by producing a literature that can be used in the inner chambers, they do the same thing on a different level, containing the dangers of women from spilling over into the male world. By expecting women to conform to the male practice once they are rid of their turbid constitutions, they invalidate their initial aim to create a truly "female" alchemy. And while claiming equality, the final achievement is always described in masculine terms. (Valussi 2014: 221.)

Apart from issues related to editorial practices, here Valussi points also toward gender inequality built within *nüdan practice itself*, as described in the texts. In addition to the changing ways these texts have been used to serve different ideologies, they also contain in-built influences of cultural and social kind, reflecting directly or indirectly their time. While Valussi reads *nüdan* literature's emergence due to concerns of established male elite, Sara Neswald (2007; 557 pages) argues for a mediated position: that the texts and their prefaces contained a variety of modalities. She remarks that "Valussi (2003) adopts a popular conception of women in Late Imperial China, and reads this into the situation of *nüdan* adepts. In this model, women's activities are conscribed by Neo-Confucian mores, and their subjective roles bound by patriarchal social norms; physically, women are confined in the sphere of the inner-chambers and defined by the roles of mother, wife and daughter" (Neswald 2007: 12). Noting the significance of lay monasticism in the Qing, Neswald

¹⁵² Women who *actually* could not leave the home, who could read only simple books, and who were tired of having to apply non-gender specific techniques to their bodies.

¹⁵³ "There are those who mistakenly take part in heterodox sects and do not know the correct way. ... Others are lured into lewd chambers. There are those who secretly attract good girls to serve as human cauldrons, as they serve as the Yellow Dame (*huang po* 黃婆), the result being that they lose their name and integrity. There are those good women who do what palace ladies like to do; they enjoy serving as cauldrons in order to seek the achievement of immortality, (but they just) continue to lose their name and integrity. There are those (women) who go on pilgrimage, enter temples and throw themselves in a disorderly manner at Buddhist and Daoist monks; others plant the seed of passion into male teachers of good schools." (*Nüdan hebian*, preface, p. 3a. Trl. in Valussi 2008: 180.)

writes that it is in this context that Valussi and others assert the importance of the inner chambers—as opposed to the monastic community—for the development of a women’s form of *neidan* (Ibid: 191–192).

Such models may have been more varied. By analyzing *Nüdan hebian*, Neswald seeks to bring in nuanced and more detailed local differentiation to describe better the lived realities of women who practiced *nüdan*. She explicates that applying feminist anthropology, critical textual analysis, traditional religious studies epistemology, and social historiography, her study aims to show that more than one dynamic was operating, and the Neo-Confucian model promoted by the Longmen Daoists did not describe the lived reality of *nüdan* adepts in the *region of Sichuan*. Discourse and practice interacted to create alternative models of religious legitimacy and local realities. (Ibid: 12.) While affirming some of Valussi’s (2003) conclusions, she seeks to fill and at some aspects correct them. Significantly, Neswald aims to break up monolithic representations in research, generalizing concepts, which tend to hide the multiplicity of actual lived realities. These include “patriarchy,” “women,” and “*nüdan*.”

Valussi spends an entire chapter of her dissertation demonstrating the Neo-Confucian influence on the establishment and maintenance of the inner chambers, and its imposition on women's *nüdan* practice. [...] Neo-Confucian influence on the means and manner of *nüdan* practice in the Qing should not be overlooked, particularly from the point of view of lower level scholar families striving to rise through the ranks. (Ibid: 192.)

However, while the male elite were the visible holders of patriarchal power in the Neo-Confucian social order, there were also *other male actors* on the field. While there were socially privileged women who subserviently practiced alchemical cultivation under paternal protection, there were *other ways for women* to find social spaces for cultivation practice. Neswald writes that scholars too often take *nüdan* as a monolithic unity, disregarding religious difference, as if women's religious practice did not reflect local and national interests, and as if *nüdan* was practiced entirely within the inner chambers, and by gentry women (ibid: 198). Concerning the forms of *nüdan* practice, her objective is to “break the concept of unity of presentation and the concept of a single practice leading in a single way to a single goal and accepted by all practitioners and schools” (ibid: 111). This orientation reflects postmodern research agenda. And here Neswald clearly calls for, and subscribes to, a representation of *neidan* as variant discourses and practices. Such variations, then, Neswald aims to characterize in the religious milieu of Sichuan of late Qing.

I find three major models described in the tracts of the *Nüdan hebian*. (...) the Longmen model has been correctly taken as the exemplary model for women Daoists throughout the Qing. (Valussi 2003, Despeux 1990, Despeux and Kohn 2003) (...) The Jingyan (Shu) model is based in the Western (Yinxian) branch of inner alchemy, and is often associated with the two Daoist luminaries, Zhang Sanfeng and Li Xiyue. (...) The Qianzhong model possesses a high degree of terminology, cosmology and body-imagery sharing with the Kālacakratra tradition promoted by the Kagyu and Gelugs sects of Tibetan Buddhism. (Ibid: 13.)

In compiling and editing the *Nüdan hebian* (1906),¹⁵⁴ He Longxiang was driven by two imperatives. On a personal level, he wanted to provide texts of physiological cultivation for his mother and other female relatives, who were already acquainted with the more mental aspects of self-cultivation. By editing and publishing these texts he promoted *nüdan* cultivation practices, which were packed in an imperially approvable format, fitting the tastes of the sexually conservative Qing, and the conceptions of the dominant, imperially sanctioned Longmen Daoism. During his years of seeking appropriate texts, he had confronted the region's multi-faceted cultivation scene.¹⁵⁵ (Ibid: 359–360.) There was no lack of self-cultivation texts for women, but it was a challenge to find "appropriate" texts: *nüdan* texts detailing bodily practices but in which female practice could be "contained, controlled and appropriate for a Confucian's mother" (ibid: 368). Despite considerable editorial effort, Neswald notes, the *Nüdan hebian* texts demonstrate *traces of alternative voices*.

Neswald takes out three such individual voices: those of Yan Zehuan (ca. 1880–?), a female practitioner; Zhenyizi (fl. ca. 1892), a male Daoist, potential *nüdan* teacher; and Fu Jinquan (fl. 1820), the editor of the first *nüdan* collection, *Nüjindan fayao*. Zhenyizi's commentary to *Nüjindan* poems explicates poems of presumably sexual-alchemical origin in terms of a non-sexual, metaphorical *nüdan* reading. He offers a particularly "feminist" model of *nüdan* practices affirming women's gender equal soteriological potential and presents himself as a potential male teacher of these practices. Not directly challenging the traditional associations of yin-pollution and yang-purity, his commentary makes these associations less certain. Exceptionally affirming that *nüdan* cultivation is wholly independent from that of men, he makes a "very dynamic and possibly dangerous social claim: Zhenyizi publicly affirms himself the appropriate master for a *neidan* tradition exclusive to woman." (Ibid: 308–311.) Yan Zehuan, a female practitioner, collated the work *Nannü dangong yitong bian*.¹⁵⁶ She is apparently the *only historical woman* who is known to have authored a *nüdan* text. Less sophisticated than Zhenyizi in her literary rhetorics, and a filial daughter vowed to stay unmarried and care for her widowed mother, she shows interest toward clear presentation of practice and totally dismisses the guidelines for appropriate behavior. Her social position and lived situation outside the patriarchal system provided her the freedom to evade constrictions of late Qing gender conservatism imposed on women. However, Yan Zehuan herself appears to continue the prejudice that women cannot reach the fully refined, highest state without outside assistance. Despite this she was able to open a space for living women to insert their own authority and physical freedom from the inner chambers. (Ibid: 341–345, 358.) Four texts of *Nüdan hebian* come from Fu Jinquan's collection *Nüjindan fayao*. While *Nüjindan fayao* appeared

¹⁵⁴ *Nüdan hebian* contains texts dating from a time-span of approximately two hundred years and geographically located mostly in the Sichuan province. (Valussi 2003: 158.)

¹⁵⁵ A cultivation scene alive with Tibetan tantrism, local religions and ethnic groups, Buddhist monastics and various forms of Daoist practice, including explicitly sexual practices linked to the Emei area. (Neswald 2007: 359–360.)

¹⁵⁶ *Nannü dangong yitong bian* (Differences and similarities in the alchemical work of men and women).

originally as a part of Fu Jinquan's larger collection,¹⁵⁷ which is characterized by the application of a form of sexual alchemy, these four *nüdan* texts show no clear traces of sexual practices. However, some references to sexual practices do appear in other texts of *Nüdan hebian*, particularly in the *Nüjindan*, and the *Hutian xingguo nüdan shize*.¹⁵⁸ These texts represent voice of an alternative practice *parallel and consistent* with that found in Fu Jinquan's larger collection, that is, of *sexual alchemy*. (Ibid: 361, 365–368, 371–373.)

The Longmen-influenced *nüdan* texts led to a soteriological dead-end of sorts, women were conceived impure and polluted despite their efforts at self-cultivation and in the end of *nüdan* process still needed assistance from a deity for ascending heavens. Neswald tries to explain how women dealt with this fact. She demonstrates how different *nüdan* textual traditions contained considerable variation: the important bodily locations varied from text to text, as did their methodologies and aims. (Ibid: 99–136.) Although the Longmen-model was dominant, there were alternative strategies. While some women would internalize this claimed inherent impurity and seek for salvation through a lifetime of purifications and sacrifice, others would, instead of direct challenge or opposition, simply disregard the in-built gender inequalities through assuming alternative religious roles, symbolically justified through re-appropriations of the ritual body symbolisms. Neswald concludes women did not reject the underlying premise which binds women/*yin* under the control of men/*yang*, but they chose to ignore dialectic *non sequiturs* and continue practice *nüdan*. (Ibid: 199.) In addition, the presence of Kālacakra tantric terminology in several texts in *Nüdan hebian* suggests that a local level influence of this tradition may have provided women soteriological alternatives through a gender neutral reading of *yin-yang* dichotomy. (Ibid: 197.)¹⁵⁹

Discussion. As in studies of "sexual alchemy," one may perceive an increasing level of theory, multidisciplinary, and reflexivity within the studies on *nüdan*, particularly in the dissertations. This reflects the larger movements in humanities and social sciences, but also an increase in understanding. Bringing in more theoretical and methodical layers does of course not in itself make research better. It should actually be expected that a basic level study (philology, hermeneutics, history) may weaken if scholars perceived as the "disciplinary other" (such as scholars of religion) enter a well defined field within an established research paradigm with disciplinary commitments, in this case sinology as the hegemonic, well earned standard. A late field of inquiry, studies of *nüdan* have increasingly signed off of essentialist perspectives, called for a historicist approach and

¹⁵⁷ *Jiyizi zhengdao mishu shiqi zhong* (Seventeen Daoist books by Jiyizi).

¹⁵⁸ *Nüjindan* (Female golden elixir); *Hutian xingguo nüdan shize* (Ten principles on female alchemy by the fruit of inner nature of Gourd Heaven).

¹⁵⁹ "I suggest that the presence of these foreign elements points to a tension or struggle against the prevailing teachings, and an attempt to convert these teachings to something practicable for women adepts. As such, this evidence both argues for and against Valussi's assertion that women's inner alchemy was a product of men's attempts to reassert patriarchal control over religious women. (Valussi 2003) I assert that women in Late Imperial China possessed many religious roles. The particular ethnic and religious environments in the local Sichuan communities provided *nüdan* adepts with access to alternative sources of religious authority." (Neswald 2007: 192.)

a firm socio-historical contextualization of the phenomenon. Particularly fertile ground for feminist emancipatory perspectives, *nüdan* is an arena dominated, but not solely represented, by female scholars. As a phenomenon of late and recent *neidan* history this part of the field has embraced developments all the way to this day, not leaving *neidan* an exotic phenomenon in distant history but an issue of lived religion among actual practitioners with actual concerns. While the feminist oriented perspectives on female empowerment have guided the inquiries to *nüdan* studies from early on, after the early phase of the studies attention has been brought to the conflicting nature in the simple empowerment narrative. As the literature sources have been studied and the practice approaches better understood, attention has been brought to the particular uses of editorial devices to make *nüdan* texts serve historically and socially specific developments. While the emergence of a specific *nüdan* literature and its canonization project shows patriarchal concern to contain religious women within a range of accepted social norms, the carefully edited textual collections yet show traces of alternative local practice positions which ignore the moralist patronizing attempts and the claims for unequal soteriological possibilities in the cosmological narrative. Therefore the lived realities of *nüdan* practitioners in the late imperial period may have been considerably more variant than what the surface-reading of texts and their prefaces might suggest. Bringing such perspectives to discussion breaks down the unitary descriptions of *nüdan* and women's position in Qing China and re-describes *nüdan* as variegated a discourse and practice. In the Republican era *nüdan* was reformulated in gender-equal terms, and similar to rest of *neidan*, increasingly dressed in scientific terminology. Later in the People's Republic, it was stripped of its original religious connotations, appearing in new collections under the label of *qigong* for women, and eventually striving to find back the religious contexts it once was part of. These developments and changes have been touched to some degree particularly by Valussi and by Liu Xun, but still remain largely unexplored. Again, as we approach contemporary times, issues become politically sensitive.

5.4 Theme three: early Quanzhen *neidan*

Literature review. *Neidan* cultivation within the early Quanzhen (Complete perfection) lineage, primarily referring to Wang Chongyang (1113–1170)¹⁶⁰ and his first and second generation disciples, remains a question dividing opinions. A central issue is the nature of *neidan* represented by the early Quanzhen ("Northern lineage") as opposed to the *neidan* represented by the Southern lineage. While scholars have tried, based often on questionable sources, to describe early Quanzhen as containing Zhong-Lü type of *neidan* cultivation within its repertoire, it may also be that

¹⁶⁰ Scholars choose to use either Wang Zhe, or the Daoist name Wang Chongyang ("Redoubled Yang"). The older, Wade-Giles transcription is Wang Ch'ung-yang. For simplification of the narrative, I will use consistently Chongyang.

traditional *neidan* symbolism was merely a manner of poetic expression for a practice that was more centered on maintaining "clarity and stillness" (*qingjing*) and ascetic discipline. The character of *neidan* discourse in the early Quanzhen texts seems to focus on doctrines such as "golden elixir is nature," stressing sudden realization, and downplaying longevity practices or an alchemical process. Do we, then, accept this discourse as a form of *neidan*, typical for the Northern lineage, or, by taking the Southern lineage model as normative, regard the Northern lineage "*neidan*" merely as various disciplines discussed under the terminology of *neidan* symbolism?

The first study proper on Quanzhen in Western languages was Yao Tao-chung's dissertation "Ch'üan-Chen: a new Taoist sect in North China during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries" (1980).¹⁶¹ This historical survey of the early development of Quanzhen delineates the significance of the Quanzhen sect to the Chinese cultural history, society and literature. Yao views Quanzhen as a religious non-political, humanitarian, and culture-preserving movement within an era of warfare, syncretizing elements of the three teachings and revitalizing the Daoist tradition. The work presents a translation of *Chongyang lijiao shiwu lun*,¹⁶² thought to contain Wang Chongyang's main teachings and compiled by his followers. While *neidan* is referred to in relation to Quanzhen practice, it receives scant attention. Nevertheless, Yao describes Quanzhen as a major school of *neidan*, and the elixir cultivation as a practice in which the body is seen as the crucible, and the ingredients contained within the body. Refining the elixir demands severing worldly desires, accumulating good deeds, and performing meditation. (Yao 1980: 241–242.) For Wang Chongyang, however, the golden elixir is one's own true nature, and it can be produced in an instant. Cultivating *qi* and spirit, and reaching the state of tranquility, with no desire and attachments, and having accumulated sufficient merits, one's spirit would become immortal. (Ibid: 104–105.)¹⁶³

Florian C. Reiter's "How Wang Ch'ung-yang (1112-1170) the Founder of Ch'üan-chen Taoism Achieved Enlightenment" discusses early Quanzhen cultivation as based centrally on the individual experience of "sudden enlightenment" after preparations of strict self-cultivation regime of involving ascetic practice and meditation (Reiter 1994: 498).¹⁶⁴

Vincent Goossaert's dissertation "La création du taoïsme moderne: l'ordre Quanzhen" (1997) is an institutional and social history of the Quanzhen order 1170–1368.¹⁶⁵ Next

¹⁶¹ The article "Quanzhen – Complete Perfection" in *Daoism Handbook* (2000) to a large part summarized the findings of this dissertation.

¹⁶² *Chongyang lijiao shiwu lun* (Redoubled Yang's Fifteen Discourses to Establish the Teachings). Attribution to Wang Chongyang has since been questioned.

¹⁶³ Yao notes that regarding schools of Daoism, in "addition to its many sub-sects, the picture of Ch'üan-chen Taoism was further complicated by its amalgamation with the Chin-tan Taoists (Golden Elixir Taoism) during the latter half of the Yuan dynasty" (Ibid: 177)

¹⁶⁴ Reiter has discussed early Quanzhen masters in several articles in 1980s and '90s, giving source-critical perspectives on the biographies and teachings of some of the Seven Perfected. The attention on *neidan* in these articles is minor. "The Soothsayer Hao Ta-tung (1140–1212) and his Encounter with Ch'üan-chen Taoism" (1981); "'Ch'ung-Yang Sets Forth his Teachings in Fifteen Discourses': A Concise Introduction to the Taoist Way of Life of Wang Che" (1985); "'A Praise of Buddha' by the Taoist Patriarch Ch'iu Ch'u-chi (1148-1227) and its Source." (1993); "How Wang Ch'ung-yang (1112-1170) the Founder of Ch'üan-chen Taoism Achieved Enlightenment" (1994); "The Ch'üan-chen Patriarch T'an Ch'u-tuan (1123-1185) and the Chinese Talismanic Tradition." (1996).

¹⁶⁵ I should thank Vincent Goossaert for kindly sending his unpublished dissertation for a read.

to the study of Quanzhen literature, it presents a fresh methodological approach, based on the research of a large epigraphic corpus of Jin (1115–1234) and Yuan (1260–1368) dynasty stone inscriptions. Goossaert represents Quanzhen as a personal form of spirituality, based on self-cultivation and accessible for all, a religion for the individual, founded on a search of perfection of the body and the self (“*personnalité*”). Introducing monasticism to Daoist tradition and thus enabling greater autonomy, these contributions to Daoist religious life are characterized as “modern.” Goossaert places the communal identity of Quanzhen in longevity practices, and particularly *neidan* cultivation, but the dissertation, instead of focusing on the cultivation, aims to answer the question how such a spiritual and ascetic practice came to the center stage of a large religious, political, cultural, and social movement. Goossaert presents Quanzhen as an egalitarian order, which also enabled *neidan* techniques for a larger population, thus opposing the traditional esoteric and secretive lines of transmission. Entering a meditation enclosure (*huandu*), and the communal meditation (*zuobo*), are particularly addressed as passage rituals from ordinary life to a religious community (Goossaert 1997b: 600–601.) The exact nature of the early meditative practice in enclosure, exemplified by those of Wang Chongyang and Ma Danyang, remains unclear: was it *neidan*, and in what particular sense? Goossaert speculates that enclosing in *huandu* may be essentially related to a prolonged practice of *neidan*, however, there remains no direct literary evidence. (Goossaert 1997: 171–182; Goossaert 1997b.)¹⁶⁶

In Paulino Belamide’s dissertation “Self-Cultivation and Quanzhen Daoism, with Special Reference to the Legacy of Qiu Chuji” (2002) early Quanzhen and Longmen remain vaguely defined throughout the work until the final part.¹⁶⁷ The first generation disciples of Wang Chongyang are introduced as a group only at the halfway of the dissertation. “Early Quanzhen” self-cultivation contained an internal and an external aspect, and *neidan* is taken here as the main aspect of this internal self-cultivation. However, this weight given on *neidan* is not given enough evidential support, while there seems to be plenty of data for other kinds of internal self-cultivation, such as ascetic discipline, and meditation focused on clarity and stillness (*qingjing*). The sources used are those ascribed to Qiu Chuji (1148–1227), who is actually mentioned as having attained the Dao through good deeds only.¹⁶⁸ Belamide admits, although the early Quanzhen masters maintained the importance of work on *qi* (equating *neidan*), they left hardly any practical instructions for its cultivation. One of the exceptions is the *Dadan zhizhi*, a *neidan* work spuriously attributed to Qiu Chuji. This work is fully translated with some annotations.

¹⁶⁶ In another occasion Goossaert relates to *neidan* the views earlier explicated in relation to Quanzhen as a whole: *neidan* appears as modern sort of religiosity because of the type of its texts and its meditative practices. (Goossaert 1998: 493.)

¹⁶⁷ Belamide finally states that “the Quanzhen Daoism discussed in this thesis is the Quanzhen of the early period, of the 12th and 13th centuries, during the Jin and Yuan Dynasties” (Belamide 2002: 168).

¹⁶⁸ Primary sources being *Changchun Qiu zhenren ji xizhou daoyou shu* (Writings Sent by Perfected Qiu Changchun to Daoist Friends in Xizhou) with several versions, *Panxi ji* (Anthology from Panxi), *Dadan zhizhi*, and *Xuanfeng qinghui lu* (Record of Celebrated Meetings of Mysterious Winds).

Stephen Eskildsen's *The Teachings and practices of the Early Quanzhen masters* (2004),¹⁶⁹ provides selected translations of a wide array of early Quanzhen literature, with an outline of its doctrines and praxis.¹⁷⁰ At its time of appearance Eskildsen's work provided the most comprehensive representation of Quanzhen practice, but has been criticized of over-interpretations and uncritical use of later hagiographic and apocryphal Quanzhen sources, texts, which may not actually be representative of the perspectives of *early* Quanzhen masters. (Kirkland 2005). Eskildsen describes early Quanzhen practice through the later discourse records (*yulu*) and uses as reference the two *neidan* sources which may *not* be regarded strictly as early Quanzhen texts, namely *Chongyang zhenren jinguan yusuo jue* and the *Dadan zhizhi*.¹⁷¹ While noting the uncertainty relating to these two texts, Eskildsen, makes the conclusion that they anyhow reflect early Quanzhen mentality and the discourses of Wang Chongyang and Qiu Chuji. However, as Reiter points in his critique, it is not at all sure, if one should take the *neidan*-diction used in early Quanzhen masters lyrical texts at face value, in the sense of Southern lineage *neidan*, or rather as a poetic expressions of eccentric literary erudition. (Reiter 2005: 326–328; Kirkland 2005: 88–97; Wang 2006: 95–98.)

Louis Komjathy's *Cultivating Perfection – Mysticism and Self-transformation in Early Quanzhen Daoism* (2007)¹⁷² presents an annotated translation of *Chongyang zhenren jinguan yusuo jue*, the above mentioned alchemical text of uncertain date continuing the Zhong-Lü heritage and problematically attributed to Wang Chongyang. A study from comparative religion perspective focusing convincingly on the complicated interrelationship between views of self, religious praxis and corresponding mystical experiences, it repositions Quanzhen in the history of Daoism as a soteriological system with its "primary concerns centered on asceticism, alchemical transformation, and mystical experiencing" (Komjathy 2007: 240). Komjathy argues that although the authorship of the text is spurious, it expresses teachings located to early Quanzhen milieu, and may contain oral teachings of Wang Chongyang, written down by his direct disciples.¹⁷³ Komjathy's theoretical discussion on the subject is admirable. He builds his representation of Quanzhen cultivation on an alchemical model aimed, through dedication to a variety of "techniques of transformation," at a shift of the ontological state into "immortality" or "perfection." This perfection Komjathy formulates, not as a recovery of a state of "authenticity"¹⁷⁴ through a practice of quiescence, but as

¹⁶⁹ The book is based on his master's thesis (1989).

¹⁷⁰ Quanzhen texts consist of poetry, pedagogic and instructional texts along with hagiographies and scarce commentaries. Having no *scriptures* of their own, Quanzhen authorities relied on the earlier scriptures of the Daoist tradition, such as *Daode jing*, *Nanhua jing* (*Zhuangzi*), *Huangting jing* (*Scripture of the Yellow Court*) and *Yinfu jing* (*Scripture of the Hidden Tally*), texts revered in *neidan* tradition, but not representative of *neidan* themselves.

¹⁷¹ *Chongyang zhenren jinguan yusuo jue* (Perfected Chongyang's Instructions on the Gold Pass and Jade Lock); *Dadan zhizhi* (Direct Pointers to the Great Elixir).

¹⁷² Based on his 2005 dissertation.

¹⁷³ As Pregadio has critically pointed out, Komjathy has quietly corrected his view concerning the text to a more careful stance since. Concerning the authenticity of both *Chongyang zhenren jinguan yusuo jue* and *Dadan zhizhi*, Pregadio writes: "Connections of both works with earlier Zhong-Lü texts are sufficiently strong and clear to question whether they are authentic Quanzhen texts or Zhong-Lü texts written (or rewritten) in the names of two major Quanzhen masters." (Pregadio 2014: 193–194.)

¹⁷⁴ Against the suggestions of Marsone, Eskildsen, and others. See, *Journal of Chinese Religions* 29 (2001), focusing on Quanzhen.

development of a *yang*-spirit capable of transcending the mortal state through advanced stages of internal alchemy.

Pierre Marsone's *Wang Chongyang (1113-1170) et la fondation du Quanzhen: ascètes taoïste et alchimie intérieure* (2011)¹⁷⁵ aims to uncover early Quanzhen doctrine of Wang Chongyang from his own writings—only the poetry is affirmed as such—and that of his early followers. Through vigorous source criticism and application of primary sources Marsone first constructs a more realistic biographical portrait of the founder and his disciples. At the heart of early Quanzhen doctrine Marsone places *neidan*, stating that the references in poetry only do not allow a reconstruction of its practice. *Instead of turning to Chongyang zhenren jinguan yusuo jue* and *Dadan zhizhi*, he analyzes the terminology and references in early Quanzhen poems and utilizes for more clarification the earlier *neidan* texts, which were established before Wang's time.¹⁷⁶ Marsone points that unlike "later descriptions on *neidan*," early Quanzhen—Wang and his disciples—does not seem to explicitly maintain a view on transformation (*hua*) of the essence, *qi*, and spirit.¹⁷⁷ Instead, the ascetic practice aims to a conjoined union and stabilization of *qi* and spirit. Also, *neidan* for the early Quanzhen proponents, instead of an aim in itself, seems to be conditioned by stillness of mind (*qingjing*), and intending towards this as the final goal. This inner peace is inseparable from inner joy (*huanle*). Wang Chongyang gives particular weight to a "point of luminosity," an intimate sense of transcendence of the human heart, a notion which had little impact on his later followers. (Marsone 2000; Marsone 2001b; Marsone 2011.)

Next I will examine the works of scholars who have attempted to reconstruct early Quanzhen *neidan* practice. While this discussion will not quite allow developing the *finesse* of these perspectives, we may gain a glimpse on the scholarly positions and approaches. These scholars have, to some extent, evaluated and criticized each other's works, and others have in review articles had their word to say. I try to come out with some insights on historiographical reflection.

What was early Quanzhen neidan, and was it, really? In a thorough review of Marsone 2011, Eskildsen describes succinctly and conveniently three different approaches taken by scholars to tackle the question of early Quanzhen *neidan* practice and its reconstruction:

I myself took the approach of making frequent recourse to anecdotes and brief meditation-related statements found in texts of the "Record of Sayings" (*yulu* 語錄) genre (esp. the *Jin zhenren yulu*, the *Danyang zhenren yulu* 丹陽真人語錄, the *Qinghe zhenren beiyu yulu* 清和真人北遊語錄, and the *Zhenxian zhizhi yulu* 真仙直指語錄), while also consulting for reference—with some stated

¹⁷⁵ Based on his 2001 dissertation.

¹⁷⁶ These include mainly the important Zhong-Lü texts *Zhong-Lü chuandao ji* (Anthology of the Transmission of the Dao from Zhongli Quan to Lü Dongbin) and *Lingbao bifa* (Complete methods of the Numinous Treasure), as well as the *neidan* compendia *Daoshu* (Pivot of the Dao), containing several Zhong-Lü related sources.

¹⁷⁷ While describing the *neidan* process as different steps for formation of the remedy (elixir) between the circuit of the kidneys and the heart, achieving the remedy through its circulation through the spine to the head and the mouth, and using the remedy to purify the body through an experience comparable to internal cremation, Marsone actually questions the position of *neidan* in the total scheme of early Quanzhen practice

reservations—the *Chongyang zhenren jinguan yusuo jue* and the *Dadan zhizhi*, particularly regarding physiological theory. Louis Komjathy advocated the view that the *Chongyang zhenren jinguan yusuo jue* does indeed record the authentic teachings of Wang Chongyang, and thus made this text the prime focus of his discussion and also provided a full, annotated translation of this unique and fascinating text. Marsone, preferring to stick with only those works of Wang Chongyang that are of unchallenged authenticity, disregards the *Chongyang zhenren jinguan yusuo jue* entirely, and for some reason also pays no attention the “Record of Sayings” literature. In looking for the theoretical framework by which to make sense of the abstruse Internal Alchemical poems of Wang Chongyang, Marsone relies mostly on the *Zhong-Lü chuandao ji*, the *Lingbao bifa*, and the *Daoshu*. (Eskildsen 2012: 468–469.)

Eskildsen excludes the work of Paulino Belamide without explication. One may only speculate Eskildsen’s position toward this issue.¹⁷⁸ Belamide intends to describe *neidan* practices of early Quanzhen, which makes the subject relevant, but in my opinion the dissertation displays several clear weaknesses starting from the overall scheme; while I recognize the existence of Belamide’s work, I will here omit it from a detailed discussion. Because Yao (1980) and Goossaert (1997) discuss *neidan* practice and theory with less intensity, I will consider their works only if relevant.

Eskildsen, Komjathy, and Marsone all try to reconstruct early Quanzhen *neidan* practice to an extent that this is possible. Understanding the main features of Quanzhen cultivation as *an overall program* is significant in situating *neidan* in this larger picture. There is little disagreement on what elements Quanzhen practice generally consisted of, and a very short summary will be in place. Quanzhen began as a core group of lay followers centered as a religious community around the charismatic leader and visionary Wang Chongyang during the Song–Jin period. Seven of Wang’s disciples were selected by the later hagiography as the first generation of Quanzhen masters.¹⁷⁹ Quanzhen grew within a few generations to become a large monastic organization. Apart from a brand of *neidan* that emphasizes the cultivation of one’s inner nature (*xing*), early Quanzhen allowed for different forms of individual practice with an orientation toward clarity and stillness (*qingjing*) through apophatic meditation, and included forms of Daoist communal ritual. Early Quanzhen advocated a renunciant orientation, with corresponding ascetic practices such as seclusion, celibacy, sleep deprivation, and voluntary poverty. In contrast to severe internal discipline, virtuous deeds were considered important in terms of compassionate charity, preaching, and healing. (Pregadio 2019: 37–37; Goossaert 2008: 814–815; Komjathy 2013: 32; Eskildsen 2004: 155–170; Marsone 2001: 95–110.)

¹⁷⁸ Reasons for dismissing a work of a particular scholar may be many. Firstly, it may be that an unpublished work does not qualify for inclusion; secondly, the work may be neglected simply because of the author’s lack of awareness of secondary sources, that is, current scholarship; thirdly, the consideration that the work is not relevant because of the choice of subject; fourth, the work may be considered incompetent for serious consideration and thus intentionally closed off of the scholarly discourse. I have noted Eskildsen may not be at his sharpest concerning secondary literature, a point noticed also by Reiter in his review on Eskildsen 2004. Later in his publications Eskildsen has clearly paid more attention to this issue. On the other hand also Marsone (2011), writing in French, neglects altogether Komjathy 2007 (published) and Belamide (unpublished) in his bibliography, but does note Eskildsen 2004. Komjathy (2007) notes Belamide, Eskildsen, and Marsone’s articles, while Marsone’s monograph appeared after Komjathy’s publication.

¹⁷⁹ They are known as the Seven Perfected (*qizhen*): Ma Yu (1123–84), Sun Bu’er (1119–83), Tan Chuduan (1123–85), Liu Chuxuan (1147–1203), Qiu Chuji (1148–1227), Wang Chuyi (1142–1217), and Hao Datong (1140–1213). The main member of the group in view of later history of *neidan* is Qiu Chuji.

Many of the scholars¹⁸⁰ relate early Quanzhen *neidan* in some way to that of Zhong-Lü lineage, which stresses a particularly physiological approach to cultivation involving different combinations of *qi* and saliva as tangible bodily elixirs and a detailed synchronization of cosmic rhythms with the firing phases of the cultivation process. Eskildsen, despite using *Chongyang zhenren jinquan yusuo jue* and *Dadan zhizhi* as reference, remains perhaps most mindful of the dominant role of maintaining "clarity and stillness" throughout all activities, and he has remained explicit to the questions still surrounding this issue, whereas Marsone and Komjathy seem more content of their findings.

Eskildsen (2004; 274 pages) initially affirms *neidan* an important role in the praxis and theory of early Quanzhen masters, while noting that they were not particularly original in it.¹⁸¹ Instead, they were distinctive in their straightforward emphasis on inner tranquility and the complementary performance of altruistic deeds. (Eskildsen 2004: 3). "The core of this multifaceted religious system lies in the cultivation of the clarity and purity of mind that occurs not only within seated meditation but also throughout all daily activities" (ibid: 195). However, Eskildsen does not really address *neidan* practice directly in his overall description, and the two *neidan* texts¹⁸² mentioned are used as sources particularly in describing the early Quanzhen perspectives on gaining health and longevity, which is seen as complementing and facilitating the "recovery and the liberation of the Real Nature/Radiant Spirit" (ibid: 61). Concerning the final attainment of early Quanzhen cultivation, Eskildsen remains oscillating between the two interpretive frameworks of *uncovering of the true nature* and *developing of the yang-spirit*. He views "the completion and recovery" of "the Real Nature/Radiant Spirit" a physical process as much as a mental one, a process of "nurturing the *qi* to complete the Spirit" (*yangqi quanshen*) (ibid: 90). Eskildsen nevertheless explicates his uncertainty, and even doubt, which he has continued to verbalize in his later articles. It concerns the difficulty to comprehend the early Quanzhen masters' attitude toward *neidan*, particularly in its more physiologically oriented aspects. While they occasionally state their disdain for the complicated longevity practices, they appear well versed in them in theory and practice

Unfortunately, the two texts (*Chongyang zhenren jinquan yusuo jue* and *Dadan zhizhi*) that describe *neidan* theories and methods in greatest detail are somewhat problematic in their authorship, despite being attributed to Wang Zhe and Qiu Chuji, respectively. Furthermore, the theories and methods in these two manuals—despite their similarities—are neither identical nor mutually coherent. It is difficult to identify a specific comprehensive *neidan* regimen that was transmitted exclusively and uniformly within the early Quanzhen movement, if indeed there was such a regimen. (Ibid: 196.)

The first Western language monograph on Quanzhen cultivation, Eskildsen's book has received plenty of attention, but also a good deal of criticism. While stating the challenges concerning the sources and the task at hand, Eskildsen explicates that the aim of his book is to thoroughly describe

¹⁸⁰ The positions of Yao and Goossaert remain relatively vague in terms of *neidan*.

¹⁸¹ As "early Quanzhen" Eskildsen discusses Wang Chongyang, the seven perfected, and certain second generation disciples.

¹⁸² *Chongyang zhenren jinquan yusuo jue* and *Dadan zhizhi*.

and analyze the teachings of the early Quanzhen masters. To accomplish this one should employ the masters' own writings, mostly of poetry difficult to understand due to its abstruse *neidan* symbolism. (Ibid: 18.) With slightly variant approaches, also Komjathy's and Marsone's interest concerns the reconstruction of early Quanzhen cultivation and *neidan*, thus facing the same challenge. Eskildsen continues that this material is fortunately supplemented and clarified by the prose discourses (*yulu*) that are more straightforward (2004: 18). He employs Quanzhen poetry, discourse records (*yulu*), the two *neidan* manuals, and hagiographic texts to make his case.¹⁸³

In the scholarly critique¹⁸⁴ the most important concern is the *choice and use of sources*. Eskildsen's work is based on primary sources from the *Daozang* and other collections, and is informed by recent Chinese scholarship as well as by a good deal of Japanese and Western scholarship, but it *does not* provide a critical discussion concerning the relative reliability of these sources, their careful dating, and authorship claims, as well as the reasons for including these instead of others. (Kirkland 2005: 89–90; Benn 2008: 542.) Several scholars have pointed a *discrepancy* between Eskildsen's aim of describing and analyzing the teachings and practices of the early Quanzhen masters, the definition of early Quanzhen, and selecting the corresponding sources. While he seems to define early Quanzhen movement as Wang Chongyang and his direct or most famous disciples, the "Seven Realized Ones," he uses *selectively* descriptions attributed to the second-generation disciples Yin Zhiping (1169–1251) and Wang Zhijin (1178–1263), but significantly, not others, and provides no reason for this particular choice, except that they bring insights into their predecessors' teachings and deeds.¹⁸⁵ And again texts attributed to early Quanzhen masters, which are clearly of later origin, namely *Chongyang zhenren jinguan yusuo jue* and *Dadan zhihi*, are extensively "exploited" (Reiter 2005; Marsone 2006) even while acknowledging the apocryphal nature of these and other texts. Also hagiographic descriptions dating over two centuries later are used as practically factual accounts. (Wang 2006: 96; Goossaert 2005: 191; Kirkland 2005: 89–90; Marsone 2006: 233–234.) These exemplifying the case, Goossaert affirms that while the chosen sources are agreeably Quanzhen documents, they are probably "products of a later stage of the order (mid-Yuan?), and therefore it is not fully consistent to include them and not the very numerous other later Quanzhen works in the canon" (Goossaert 2005: 191). Thus, instead of teachings and practices of *early* Quanzhen masters, Eskildsen's book may better be taken as a collection of "carefully read and meticulously translated" excerpts from Jin–Yuan Quanzhen sources. (Kohn 2004: 394; Marsone 2006: 234.)¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³ Komjathy (2007: 382), identifies the following genres in the "early Quanzhen corpus," which he defines as works associated with Wang Chongyang and his first-generation disciples: poetry, as contained in anthologies (*ji*); discourse records/recorded sayings (*yulu*); instructions (*jue*); discourses (*lun*); commentaries (*zhu*); records (*lulji*); and hagiographies (*zhuan*).

¹⁸⁴ These include: Livia Kohn (2004), Russell Kirkland (2005), Richard G. Wang (2006), Pierre Marsone (2006), Vincent Goossaert (2006), James A. Benn (2008).

¹⁸⁵ Also Wang Chongyang's earlier Shaanxi followers and "companions" are excluded from the definition.

¹⁸⁶ Such may be taken as historiographical lessons for defining with clarity what is studied, and carefully and explicitly using corresponding sources in order not to distort their relation.

Another central issue concerns the *analysis* of sources and how *conclusions* are made. A number of reviewers have pointed that Eskildsen's treatment is "scientifically questionable" (Marsone), or his analysis of sources is "unsophisticated" (Benn). These comments point to a few issues. Benn observes Eskildsen to assume that hagiographical materials tell something substantial about how real people actually thought and acted, even when produced centuries later (2008: 542). His interpretations move swiftly from questionable source materials to speculations on what the historical figures Wang Chongyang and his followers psychologically *may have* experienced, thought, and what they then probably did. (Kirkland 2005: 91.)¹⁸⁷

Komjathy's (2007; 553 pages) convincing treatment, taking a religious studies approach, encompasses a wide range of theoretical matters centered on the perspectives of comparative mysticism and transformative practice. Komjathy discusses interpreting the term Quanzhen as "Complete Perfection," against the interpretation "Completion of Authenticity" as suggested by Marsone (2001b). These represent two different practice models, with potentially complementary or mutually exclusive soteriological perspectives, which Komjathy clearly articulates. This has directly to do with *neidan*. Komjathy argues for an "alchemical" model within the context of early Quanzhen cultivation, instead of a "quietistic" model, as represented, in Komjathy's view, by Marsone and to some degree, Eskildsen:¹⁸⁸

The quietistic model is most clearly expressed in classical Daoism... [...] In the quietistic model, the adept endeavors to "return to" his or her original nature, which is a manifestation of the Dao. Emphasis is placed on "nonaction" (*wuwei* 無為), "simplicity" (*pu* 朴), and "suchness" (*ziran* 自然). Here death is part of the natural, cosmological process, and the adept accepts his or her death as a dissolution into, a merging with, the cosmos. In the alchemical model, the adept endeavors to perfect or transform his or her nature, which is simultaneously "biological" limitation and the latent spark of Perfection. Emphasis is placed on cultivation, refinement, and transformation. Here death as dissolution is the destiny of the ordinary human being, but the aspiring adept wishes to transcend such a given. The alchemist attempts to alchemically-transmute defilements and to actualize a transcendent spirit, which may transcend physical mortality. One aspires to move from ordinary human being to perfected and immortal being. (Komjathy 2007: 21.)

Thus, Komjathy relates the quietistic model in its exemplary form to classical Daoism, characterized by non-action, return to Dao through quiescence, accepting death as a sagely person, while the alchemical model is represented by Zhong-Lü lineage and contains various cultivation techniques to transcend the human state and become immortalized. Komjathy draws two contrasting movements: return and becoming, which he relates to two seemingly opposing soteriological models with different aims. He continues that the question of the complementarity or mutual exclusivity of these models (within early Quanzhen) is significant, and

¹⁸⁷ Because the *hagiographic* accounts (the comment involves sarcasm) written centuries later, and *embellished* with various "tropes," or "aretalogical" elements, "intended to inspire a greater faith, to encourage more enthusiastic practice, to recommend Taoism to non-Taoists, to persuade government authorities to patronize Taoist institutions, et cetera" (Kirkland 2005: 95), in Eskildsen's reading may describe the Quanzhen masters' "psychological problems, we can employ the resulting psychoanalytical conclusions as a basis for drawing new conclusions about the nature, and the effects, of Taoist religious practices in those circles." (Kirkland 2005: 92.)

¹⁸⁸ Giving this perspective Komjathy has obviously not seen Marsone's dissertation, but is commenting only the latter's 2001 article.

the adoption of a particular model matters in terms of both Daoist practice and Daoist soteriology. If the principles and methods of the alchemical model are followed, then the Daoist adept must transform his or her self. [...] What exactly this means remains open to debate and differs from tradition to tradition, and often from practitioner to practitioner. However, what is clear is that one must become other than what one is when one begins the alchemical process. This is not the case in the quietistic model. From the beginning, one is “perfect” or “complete.” [...] These are different practice regimens with different outcomes. In the alchemical model, one seeks personal survival and transformation; in the quietistic model, one merges with and disappears into the cosmos. (Komjathy 2007: 21–22.)

So the question, which is recognized by Komjathy as well as Eskildsen and Marsone, concerns the role and position of alchemical praxis within the early Quanzhen cultivation. Komjathy defines his interpretive perspective of early Quanzhen cultivation with the “primary characteristics” of asceticism, internal alchemy, and mystical experiencing.¹⁸⁹ While early Quanzhen adepts clearly did adapt classical Daoist models of quietism, with importance given on maintaining stillness and clarity, the primary context in which this was embedded, was a *larger and more inclusive alchemical model* with a stress on ascetic, alchemical, and mystical praxis. Therefore, Komjathy proceeds to call early Quanzhen an alchemical movement. (Komjathy 2007: 22–23.)¹⁹⁰

Komjathy’s monograph was applauded by Russell Kirkland (2009) and also James Miller, who estimates it displays a rare combination of impeccable technical expertise as well as sophisticated engagement with theoretical issues in the study of religions (2008: 95). This is hard to disagree with. Concerning the text translated, Miller says, however, that Komjathy reviews previous attempts to date the text and argues that there is no conclusive reason to dispute the traditional view of the text as an authentic record of Wang Chongyang’s teachings. And if the text did not originate as a direct transcription of Wang’s teachings, it still testifies of the early Quanzhen worldview. (Miller 2008: 97.) Whereas Komjathy’s overall discussion is admirable, this issue raises reservation.¹⁹¹ Richard G. Wang writes¹⁹² that concerning *Chongyang zhenren jinguan yusuo jue* and *Dadan zhizhi* there are more discrepancies than similarities between these works and other writings that can be confidently attributed to Wang and Qiu. The works do not fit the early Quanzhen texts in content, terminology, or style, and are more compatible with the theories and methods of the Zhong-Lü tradition. Wang addressed Eskildsen, but this pertains exactly also to Komjathy. The question at stake is whether the works belong to “early Quanzhen,” when they can be loosely classified as later Quanzhen works. Wang answers no, because the early Quanzhen did

¹⁸⁹“Secondary characteristics” would include communal, altruistic, ritualistic, reformist and “syncretistic” tendencies.

¹⁹⁰ Eskildsen’s position in this regard has remained more ambivalent and he has articulated his uncertainty, firstly, of the role of internal alchemy within the Quanzhen cultivation, and secondly, of underlying soteriological model: whether the cultivation is a matter of “recovery” of true nature or “completion” of the yang-spirit.

¹⁹¹ Based on a thorough text-critical discussion, Komjathy formulates that “the *Jinguan yusuo jue* comes from the early historical phase of the Daoist religious movement known as Quanzhen, is an early Quanzhen text, and, as much as any extant writing, preserves some of the authentic teachings of Wang Chongyang. (...) This view would place the *Jinguan yusuo jue* in the incipient organized phase of early Quanzhen Daoism. (...) The collection effort was, in turn, most likely initiated and completed by one or more of Wang Chongyang’s first-generation disciples, with the *Jinguan yusuo jue* being based on distinct transcriptions, short-hand notations, individual recollection, and communal discussion. From my perspective, this probably occurred immediately after the death of Wang Chongyang in 1170.” (Komjathy 2007: 279.)

¹⁹² In reaction to Eskildsen’s choice of sources.

not seem to systematically embrace the synthesis of the Quanzhen, Zhong-Lü, and the Southern Lineage legacies. (Wang 2006: 96–98.) Such synthesis, or merging, of lineages and particularly their corresponding practice models began from late thirteenth century on.

Acknowledging Komjathy's discussion on the advanced practices of "early Quanzhen *neidan*," Eskildsen writes that he displays an extraordinary knowledge and command of the large body of early Quanzhen literature, drawing amply and fruitfully from the *neidan* literature of the Northern Song and Yuan, and from relevant studies on Chinese medicine, comparative religion and mysticism. His discussion also seems to benefit from personal experiences in meditation and interactions with contemporary Daoist practitioners. (Eskildsen 2008b: 153.) The first-person and ethnographic perspectives, interactions with Chinese Daoists, and even formal discipleship, have only recently begun to be theoretically acknowledged in *neidan* studies, particularly through Komjathy's own discussion. Noting that Komjathy places weight on the interpretation of early Quanzhen practice based on an alchemical model of transforming the ontological condition, Eskildsen affirms, that one cannot dismiss either the "quietistic" or "alchemical" model of interpretation. While the final goal is indeed the attainment of immortality in the *yang*-spirit (*yangshen*; an entirely different ontological condition from that of ordinary people), the *yang*-spirit (as perfect nature, *zhenxing*) is also conceived as something one has always partaken in, only it has become entrapped and corrupted. (Ibid: 153). While Komjathy would agree with the presence of "quietistic" practices within the early Quanzhen, his main thrust is to argue and clarify that the two approaches have conflicting soteriological perspectives, and that early Quanzhen was guided, in the larger context, by an alchemical model toward "perfection." Since Komjathy builds much of his reconstruction of the "alchemical model" and *neidan* in the early Quanzhen on views represented by *Chongyan zhenren jinguan yusuo jue*¹⁹³ and similar Zhong-Lü associated writings, the question on early Quanzhen *neidan* remains in my view open.¹⁹⁴

Marsone (2011; 473 pages) neglects Komjathy's work altogether. Based on his 2001 dissertation, one would assume it to have been re-written to fit the current scholarly discourse. He positions himself at certain questions in relation to Eskildsen, for instance, by questioning the role of charitable deeds in early Quanzhen—as this theme is not present in the early texts—and criticizing Eskildsen's usage of "suspicious later historical anecdotes" (Marsone 2011: 209). Like Komjathy, Marsone assumes *neidan* a significant role within early Quanzhen cultivation and discusses its reconstruction at length in the fourth chapter of his monograph. He explicates that his ideal was to begin from the poetry and clarify its meanings through the reference texts mentioned

¹⁹³ In his review, Eskildsen also notes that they both have missed an aspect concerning the dating of the text. Two passages in the text contain apocalyptic and messianic references that remind of later "sectarian" *baojuan* literature, and may indicate that the text was written or altered by someone who lived *significantly* later than Wang Chongyang. (Eskildsen 2008b: 155–157.)

¹⁹⁴ Komjathy approaches early Quanzhen cultivation as a somehow united system and tries to reconstruct it as such. The discontinuities between Wang Chongyang's perceptions on the "luminant pearl" with those of his disciples, have been referred to in Marsone 2011. Similarly, for example, we know that Ma Danyang, Wang Chongyang's senior disciple seemed to stress a form of cultivation more clearly based on cultivation of "clarity and stillness." One could ask: what if one should rather look for a variety of perspectives, which would be centrally inspired by the teachings of Wang Chongyang, but creatively combined with contemporaneous practice models, depending on the personality and backgrounds of the earliest disciples?

most often in the writings of Wang Chongyang and his disciples, texts which are mostly not alchemical texts as such, but are often referred to in *neidan* literature.¹⁹⁵ But since the poems deemed authentic¹⁹⁶ and the reference texts could not provide a sense of the process, more systematical texts were used to clarify the symbols used by Wang. (Ibid: 318.)¹⁹⁷ While the role of *neidan* is indeed considered significant, instead of perceiving the alchemical model as the overall scheme of cultivation, internal alchemy is rather taken as *an aspect of Wang Chongyang's mysticism*, an ascetic and mystical "theology" as a religious path back toward the Dao, or the state of unity.¹⁹⁸ In Marsone's perspective, *neidan* within early Quanzhen, and particularly that of Wang Chongyang, is mobilized to serve a purpose within a larger context. This is exemplified by Wang's discourse of a point of luminosity or luminant pearl, which carries additional layers of meaning to those prescribed to it in earlier *neidan* tradition. This discourse Marsone considers the heart of Wang Chongyang's mysticism and his most profound dimension (ibid: 367):

This "point," or this "luminant pearl," which is the most frequent theme in the works of Wang, is before else the "pearl" of original *yang* formed through internal alchemy, resulting from the union of *yin* drawn from *yang* and *yang* drawn from *yin*, the trigram *qian* obtained by replacing the broken middle line of *li* with the middle line of *kan*, which enlivens and purifies the human being. This is the sense which one meets everywhere in internal alchemy, and particularly in the Zhong-Lü current. If Wang would have understood the "point" only in this sense, he would have not innovated anything, Zhang Boduan [first "patriarch" of the Southern lineage] would have talked about it with enough clarity a century before. But for Wang, this "point" is not uniquely alchemical in a certain aspect; it is no longer a simple means of longevity, nor a fruit of individual ascesis. It is also identified as the true master of a person. (Marsone 2011: 366, translation mine)

Marsone perceives *neidan* to indeed serve a specific and central role in early Quanzhen, but Wang Chongyang brought it "further," or went beyond, particularly in the sense of the importance given to this point of luminosity which equals the heart as the "true master of authenticity." Marsone considers it certain that for Wang, it is *neidan* which enables the "recovering" and "perfecting" of the ontological unity between the intimacy of the human heart and Heaven, or the Divine. (Ibid: 367–368.) While in the Quanzhen poetry the physiological practices, allowing for health and longevity, are often degraded as merely secondary minor practices,

The passages in which Wang and his companions relativize the importance of the internal alchemical practices may thus be re-read in a different light. The intention of these believers is not to undermine the value of the practices they have first used, but first of all to return ["*ramener*"] these practices in the mystical experience. (...) The essence of his message consisted in recalling that the most important thing is the presence of the divine within the person, and that the detachment of all passions and from the notion of "self" is the aim of ascesis, and that internal alchemy is the privileged means to perfect the union with the Way and to retrieve of its presence the sense and the realization of life. (Ibid: 368, translation mine.)

¹⁹⁵ These include the *Daode jing* (Scripture of the Dao and its Virtue), *Zhuangzi* (Book of Master Zhuang), *Yinfu jing* (Scripture of the Hidden Accordance), *Huangting jing* (Scripture of the Yellow Court), *Ruyao jing* (Mirror for Compounding the Medicine), and the *Qingjing jing* (Scripture of Clarity and Quiescence).

¹⁹⁶ In *Quanzhen ji* (Anthology of the Completion of Authenticity), *Jiaohua ji* (Anthology of Religious Conversions) and *Fenli shihua ji* (Anthology of the Ten Stages of Pear-Slicing).

¹⁹⁷ These texts were, as mentioned already, the *Zhong-Lü chuandao ji*, *Lingbao bifa*, and the *Daoshu* collection. *Zhong-Lü chuandao ji* and *Lingbao bifa* are very recently translated into English and studied to some degree by Livia Kohn (2020).

¹⁹⁸ For Marsone, "theology" carries approximately the same meaning as the term "soteriology" for Komjathy.

Therefore, in Marsone's reading, *neidan* in early Quanzhen, and particularly that of Wang Chongyang's, serves as *a vehicle for perfecting the mystical union of the human heart and the Dao* within a larger religious discourse, which prioritizes the presence of transcendence within the human heart. This *neidan* is reconstructed in terms of Zhong-Lü heritage. For Komjathy, in contrast, the larger scheme of early Quanzhen is alchemical, found on a need for a shift in the ontological status, transformation through praxis from a human being into a "perfected," a transcendent immortal. In this overall context, other approaches, such as apophatic meditation and ascetic practice, are used. *Neidan* process is also reconstructed in Zhong-Lü terms. Eskildsen, then, chooses the interpretation of "authenticity" instead of "perfection" and holds that maintaining clarity and stillness in all actions is the central feature of early Quanzhen, while he at the same time remains hesitant about the question of Quanzhen *neidan*. Discussing this, he anyhow refers to sources which indicate a Zhong-Lü approach.

Marsone's monograph was reviewed by Eskildsen (2012) and Komjathy (2012). His choice of sources has been methodologically the most strict.¹⁹⁹ Eskildsen acknowledges that the work goes beyond other studies in the way it sorts out, discusses and analyzes the primary sources concerning the lives and activities of Wang and his main disciples, and thereby provides an unsurpassed account of the early Quanzhen history in its thoroughness and accuracy. (Eskildsen 2012: 464.) Marsone also provides a sound and detailed reconstruction of "early Quanzhen *neidan*," grounded on the texts Quanzhen adepts frequently quoted, the Zhong-Lü texts known to have preceded Wang Chongyang's time with similarities in terminology, as well as relying on anthologies of poetry which are relatively uncomplicated in their attribution to historical Wang Chongyang, primarily the *Chongyang quanzhen ji*. However, Eskildsen notes, that also for Marsone the most problematic issue has turned out to be ascertaining what exactly the *neidan* teachings and practices of Wang Chongyang and his disciples consisted of. The problem is founded on the fact that the writings, that can be safely attributed to Wang and his disciples, consist of poetry. And while *neidan* indeed is among its most frequently occurring themes, the poetry is "so abstruse, laconic, and loaded with metaphors and jargon so as to often seem unintelligible" (Eskildsen 2012: 468).

Reading early Quanzhen poetry in the light on *Zhong-Lü chuandao ji* and *Lingbao bifa*—something Marsone assumes valid—proves in Eskildsen's perspective problematic as they contain inconsistencies in terms of praxis.²⁰⁰ Whereas the Zhong-Lü texts advocate complicate procedures

¹⁹⁹ Eskildsen describes succinctly Marsone's approach for constructing a critical historical narrative by first over-viewing the ten hagiographic sources and then proceeding "to carefully and methodically discuss Wang Chongyang's life events by examining side-by-side the testimonies of each of the hagiographies and analyzing them in light of evidence available in secular historical sources and re-evaluating the merits of observations that have been previously made by Chinese and Japanese scholars. (...) In over-viewing the various works (extant and non-extant) that have been attributed to Wang Chongyang, Marsone distinguishes between "authentic" and 'apocryphal' texts." (Eskildsen 2012: 464.) Further, with "the same meticulous approach to the primary sources that he does in the case of Wang Chongyang, Marsone sheds light on some the more distinct features of the personalities and doctrinal emphases of each of the 'Seven Authentics.'" (Eskildsen 2012: 465.)

²⁰⁰ Eskildsen also points out that many *Daoshu* sources Marsone quotes have actually nothing to do with Zhong-Lü nor even *neidan* (Eskildsen 2012: 469).

in terms of correspondences, timing, saliva, and body postures, the poetry, instead, calls for awareness at all times and relative simplicity of method. (Eskildsen 2012: 469.) Komjathy notes that Marsone is less successful on early Quanzhen religious dimensions: while he addresses all the major themes such as asceticism, renunciation, and internal alchemy, the work lacks in understanding of early Quanzhen soteriology. A work of French sinology, with a primarily historical, textual and social scientific approach to Daoist studies, Marsone has less engagement with study of religion. (Komjathy 2012: 125.) However, Marsone, as well as Komjathy, and Eskildsen, all approach early Quanzhen cultivation as a religious, mystical, and ascetic practice.

Discussion. Komjathy posits that early Quanzhen is now studied in sufficient degree also in terms of *neidan*, and that when Marsone's monograph is read together with that of Eskildsen and his own "we have a fairly complete Western language understanding of early Quanzhen Daoism. We may now look forward to studies of the movement during the Yuan, Ming, Qing, and modern periods." (Komjathy 2012: 125.) Marsone does not vocalize doubts on this, but Eskildsen remains explicitly doubtful: "I can only admit that I myself have yet to chart out the best way of ascertaining what Quanzhen Internal Alchemy originally consisted of. The task remains a work-in-progress for all of us." (Eskildsen 2012: 470.) The case of early Quanzhen *neidan* is perhaps not quite yet a settled issue. Of these scholars, Eskildsen is the only one who admits openly, that *none* of the representations may be definitive as such.

The conflicting nature of the views in "early Quanzhen sources" is perfectly clear for each of these scholars. The question is then, how do they try to make sense, or attempt to explain it? Komjathy suggests a model in which practices like stilling the mind pertain to a first phase, or an "existential dimension," enabling an experience of unity with the Dao. The more advanced practices pertaining to a "post-mortem dimension" aim for alchemical transformation. He also suggests a contextual way of speaking about them:

At first glance, it appears that there are competing, even contradictory, views concerning immortality and perfection within the early Quanzhen movement. At times, the early Quanzhen adepts seem to suggest that religious praxis results in a state of mystical absorption, wherein one becomes permeated by the Dao and lives in carefree bliss. At other times, it seems that immortality is understood as involving transcending the mundane world and the physical body. After death, one's yang-spirit, or the body-beyond-the-body, enters the ranks of immortals. (...) Beyond dismissing the early Quanzhen adherents as "unsystematic" or "confused," there are a number of ways to make sense of these seemingly contradictory views. From my perspective and based on my research, the most viable interpretation is that in different contexts the early adepts are discussing different aspects of self-transformation. (Komjathy 2007: 247.)

The perspective on different aspects of cultivation is also proposed by Marsone, but in a different sequence. While for Komjathy the *larger model* is alchemical, for Marsone it is internal peace, or clarity and stillness. For Marsone, alchemical praxis is set into a model aiming for mystical union in which clarity and stillness (*qingjing*) is the central focus. For Eskildsen, cultivating clarity and stillness in all actions is the center axis of early Quanzhen, but he can't decide about the final

soteriological aim and leaves it open, calling it both, "real nature/radiant spirit." From other possible perspectives, Pregadio (2014, 2014b) clarifies the view, perhaps more traditional, according to which the early Quanzhen represents a different interpretation to *neidan* entirely—and not a Zhong-Lü type—in which the cultivation of the *xing* (true nature) naturally encompasses the cultivation of *ming* (life), leading to the formation of the "elixir."²⁰¹ This view is echoed in the *neidan* discourse of several masters in the later tradition, and would seem more in synchronicity with the early Quanzhen sources considered most authentic, the poetry anthologies. Also, this would correspond to the higher of the two models of cultivation as conceived in the *Cantong qi*, the primary source of *neidan* theory (Pregadio 2014b: 461, 466–467).²⁰² But this would *not be* internal alchemy per se, in the sense of Zhong-Lü or Southern lineage involving a process of transformation.

Eskildsen and Komjathy represent North-American scholarship.²⁰³ Marsone and Pregadio pertain to European, French tradition of sinology, while Pregadio is Italian. Whereas the sinology dominated research programs have involved mainly philological and textual, and historical approaches, Komjathy's discussion benefits from a broad understanding of a religious studies, making his stance interesting from the point of view of this study. Whereas Komjathy openly presents himself as a scholar-practitioner, particularly as a lay Quanzhen Daoist, Eskildsen ²⁰⁴ explicitly says that he does not practice meditation, and only studies the texts. I have not found explication of Marsone's position, but I will presume it is that of neutral outsider. Each of these scholars maintain a sympathetic position toward their subject without any attempt to tear religion down. Komjathy, whose self-reflection is on a high level, holds certain personal stakes on the field, and while his representation on Quanzhen *neidan* takes advantage on his experiences on practice as well as personal connections to Daoists, it may link his interpretations to some extent to the later tradition. Komjathy's also harnesses his conclusions to an argument on human spiritual potential,²⁰⁵ interesting, but reminiscent of a religionist stance. (Komjathy 2007: 260–261.)²⁰⁶ Pregadio carefully withholds his theoretical assumptions and position, and maintains strictly in the business of doctrinal study and traditional sinology. While his scholarship is of utmost precision and care, this "secretiveness" raises questions, and is certainly not explicit nor self-reflective in a way that one would expect in the field of religious studies. He seems to interpret *neidan* centrally on the

²⁰¹ Pregadio questions the role of alchemical practices in the early Quanzhen, noting that "the discourse of self-cultivation in sources associated with the early Northern Lineage makes use of Buddhist views and terminology. This should not be seen as an influence of Buddhism over an original 'alchemical' core made up of Neidan practices in the strict sense of the term. In fact (...) it is unclear whether the Northern Lineage at its origins had an 'alchemical' core at all." (Pregadio 2014: 186.) However, he leaves it yet an open question, while remaining on the more skeptical side

²⁰² Pregadio writes, that "lack of attention to these modes—often due to emphasis given to the Neidan views of the 'body' *per se*, or to the influence of present-day forms of practice only partly related to Neidan—would involve disregard for the variety of discourses created during the history of Neidan..." (Pregadio 2014: 182).

²⁰³ Eskildsen's degrees are from Canada, I presume he is Canadian, Komjathy is American.

²⁰⁴ See Eskildsen 2015, introduction.

²⁰⁵ Referring to Richard King's (1999) "epistemology of limitation" *contra* "epistemology of possibility" provided in the spiritual traditions, with open reference to writers such as Mircea Eliade, Ken Wilber, and Paramahansa Yogananda.

²⁰⁶ His activity on publishing translations of *neidan* texts for a more popular audience (also practitioners) seems something of a mission.

lines of the Qing dynasty Longmen patriarch Liu Yiming (1734–1821) and other authors that represent a similar type of reading of *neidan*.

5.5 Concluding remarks

A perspective has been gained on three thematic arenas of *neidan* studies: sexual alchemy, female alchemy, and early Quanzhen *neidan*. I have represented in some detail the most important research on these sub-fields, positions toward identified debates or issues, critique, and analyzed claims and positions based on the theoretical frame. Scholars and their views presented here may be taken as representative of the research programs with varying interests concerning *neidan*, and therefore, illustrating the approaches and the state of the field in *neidan* studies.

First I want to point out that after reading a considerable bulk of publications it seems clear that the level of studies varies and so do the standards for scholarly work. Concerning reception there seems to be a quiet agreement on a polite approach, and mostly studies are not outright shot down. In some cases, such as Eskildsen's work on Quanzhen, certain basic approaches applied in the study, involving certain interpretive naivety, received considerable critique. In the case of dissertations, mostly unpublished works, when dissent occurs, the common practice seems to be ignoring, or silence. Needless to say, such rejections have corresponding concrete social dimensions. This has occurred in with respect to Hudson's representation of Chen Zhixu as a "sexual alchemist," although the work has been referenced by the more recently matured scholars. Hudson may be located to the fourth, "multidisciplinary" program. Regardless of reasons for scholarly disagreement based on different interpretive traditions or research programs, or situations of *equivocation* (same terms are used, but they pertain to different theoretical contexts entirely) and *incommensurability* (theories of parallel research programs/paradigms may not allow for comparison), there is also bad scholarship,²⁰⁷ which is not scholarly, or "scientific," and is perhaps theological.²⁰⁸

Within the first theme on sexual alchemy, a curious scholarly debate was spotted, which seems to have its historical roots within traditional *neidan* discourse itself, having to do with negotiating the orthodox or "true" *neidan* against heterodox, or "false," practices. While the advocates of solo-interpretation have held the hegemonic position for the solo approach as "true," historically it has been challenged by the proponents of the sexual interpretation. Similar model of exclusion has curiously been duplicated to the scholarly discourse, in which certain scholars hold more "true" reading of the tradition based on the discourse itself, while scholars paying attention

²⁰⁷ This seemed to be the case of Belamide's dissertation. I also say this as I know Belamide has chosen to pursue a career elsewhere, and not in the academic studies of *neidan*.

²⁰⁸ More common may generally be that the particular disciplinary requirements are not fulfilled, such as those of sinology. Also, a sinologically exemplary work may not be acknowledged, say, among scholars of religion.

also to the concrete practices (Wile), social environment and lived reality (Hudson, fourth research program), are more open for these "crude" readings and practices of *neidan*. The more socio-historically, sociologically and analytically oriented, perhaps secular and reductive readings are easily condemned as "perverse" or "hyper-sexualized" by those whose research interest is to understand, interpret, and clarify a "spiritual" *neidan* tradition. Robinet, locating to the third research program, in particular had the interest to define *neidan* exclusively, ruling out sexual interpretations of *neidan* as non-existent, or at least marginal, while it seems, that particularly the Ming dynasty culture did allow for sexual interpretations of *neidan* to surface and become "relatively popular."²⁰⁹ I have suggested the search for a "true" *neidan* may implicate essentialist perspectives, or traces of such. Distanced and neutral readings of sources with an attention to the tradition as a whole are needed. Historically oriented approaches such as that of Liu Xun, locating to the second research program, have accepted sexual practice as one mode of practices applied by historical figures. Taking certain *neidan* narratives as representative for the whole discourse should be encountered with an approach which allows for all its historical and structural variations.

Within the second thematic area we have seen argumentation informed by feminist theory aiming to correct an anachronistic projection read into the earlier female alchemical tradition stemming from gender-equal readings of *nüdan* by Chen Yingning, whose views have influenced also scholarly perspectives on *nüdan* in the late twentieth century. Although female alchemy can be construed as an extension of women's growing demand for societal space, mobility, and agency, the emergence of *nüdan* literature may be read as elite male response to control women, already too free (Valussi). Still, in lived religiosity, agency seems to have been found in alternative local spaces simply by neglecting the oppressing aspects of *nüdan* doctrine (Neswald). Study of *nüdan* has been an obvious site for feminist methodologies, and thus sociologically oriented postmodern critique. While Despeux's pioneering approach may be located more to the sinologically dominating third program, albeit with practice and body orientation with feminist attention, Valussi and Neswald locate to the fourth research program. Despeux reflects certain personal affinity to *nüdan* practice perhaps as a sympathizer (surprisingly many of the scholars have some sort of personal practice relation to *neidan*), and provides also material for contemporary practitioners. The works of Valussi and Neswald aim to provide sociological explanations for historical events, applying critical feminist methodologies and discourse theory. They would seem to hold neutral or even critical outsider positions.

In the third theme on early Quanzhen *neidan* we have observed a debate on the status and reconstruction of a possible *neidan* practice, references to which may be veiled in metaphoric language in anthologies of poetry by the early Quanzhen figures. While often framed as a Zhong-Lü type of practice, variously constructed, it may also have been a wholly different mode "*neidan*"

²⁰⁹ This "relative popularity" is an issue. While actual "sexual alchemical" texts are few, the vocalized opposition to it may say something of its popularity.

cultivation as suggested by Pregadio, or not *neidan* at all. Of several studies on early Quanzhen, four have addressed early Quanzhen *neidan* at length, reconstructing it based on chosen sources, a sort of a detective work with a more or less speculative answer. In addition to using sources in the early Quanzhen corpus of texts, defined more tightly or more loosely, references to a possible interpretation may be sought from continuities of earlier and later tradition as Pregadio has suggested, therefore confirming the traditional perspective of a Northern lineage *neidan*. Marsone, Eskildsen, Komjathy, and Pregadio have all recognized *neidan* in terms of religion, but Marsone, Eskildsen, and Pregadio may be located closer to the third research program, Komjathy locates to the fourth program.

Some of the scholars are committed to non-reductive, hermeneutic readings of the tradition, meaning a willingness to read *neidan* more in terms of original sources and close to the boundaries set by the texts themselves, with an attempt to understand and clarify. This sort of approach aims to maintain respect for the original sources and the mentality of the authors and their discourse. It also reflects the mainstream of sinological approach, considered through postcolonial reflection. A hermeneutic approach generally pertains to scholars committed to the presumptions and conventions in the second and third research programs. Analytic and explanatory approaches stem from sociologically and critically oriented models. The scholarship on these areas of *neidan* studies maintain mainly respect toward the tradition, but for example the problematic issues of "sexual alchemy" and its use, or exploitation, of young women and even pubescent girls as sources of the "external medicine" has obviously raised critical response from our contemporary perspective. Also the feminist critical readings of *niidan* literature and its features of gender oppression do not necessarily shed the tradition in a pleasant light. Such issues explicated and represented in ugly historical detail may not illustrate *neidan* tradition or Daoism in a way an adherent or sympathizer might find preferable. On the other hand, historical research shows that these are indeed features which appear in the tradition, and a critical perspective on history may allow also adherents for a more self-conscious and clear-headed grasp of the multivocality of *neidan* discourse, tradition, and practice. In some cases theoretical etic analysis may appear unrecognizable from an adherent perspective, or even from the perspective of hermeneutic readings that stay close to the "text," and thus may create opposition from the proponents of other research programs. Such events may be approached through recognition of the substantial implicit differences in approach and research interest. But should one approach dominate? The answer may be political. However, to comprehend the tradition in its variety and entirety, a plurality of research approaches is preferable, because "the cultural constructs, methodological approaches, and academic control exerted by representatives of the Sinological position have not only increased our understanding of Daoism – *they have also limited our understanding* (Komjathy 2007: 7)."

6. REFLECTIONS

So, may we say something now? By bringing together wider notions on research programs and *neidan* descriptions from chapter 4, and more detailed discussion of the three thematic arenas in chapter 5, I will suggest brief answers for the broad research question—concerning the state of the field—through its subquestions, beginning from the three primary ones, which have already been addressed at length. All this will reflect the limitations of my own understanding. Questions concerning future prospects I will address in the next subchapter.

How can the research history be typologized? — I've suggested a heuristic device of research programs as a typology of approaches, understood as connected to research communities current at a specific time, existing in particular national and geographic locations, relating to certain interpretive traditions and research interests, and expressing a certain responsiveness to scholarly critique. These approaches are represented as roughly chronological in emergence, but should be considered as overlapping and competing in influence. Partially they also reflect imaginable stages of disciplinary development.²¹⁰ I've named these research programs through their various research contexts: 1) *History of scientific thought*, 1930s–1980s in Britain and the United States; connected to history of science (particularly chemistry), sinology, comparative history of ideas. 2) *Chinese cultural history*, 1920s– in Britain, Australia, United States, Canada; connected to sinology, literary studies, history. 3) *Discourse and doctrine*, 1970s– mainly in France and Italy; connected to sinology, philology, continental philosophy, history of ideas, sociology. 4) *Religion*, 1990s– internationally; Chinese studies, sociology, gender studies, study of religion, anthropology, social history. No doubt such a typology could be also different.

How has neidan been constructed in the research? — In chapter 4, I have suggested a variety of definitions or descriptions which I take to represent broadly the variations of scholarly construction of *neidan*. They have an unsystematic correspondence to the research programs. They include: 1) *Neidan* as physiological alchemy, represented by Joseph Needham & Lu Gwei-Djen, corresponds to the first research program. 2) *Neidan* primarily as a technique of enlightenment, or symbolical alchemy, represented by Isabelle Robinet. 3) *Neidan* as a synthesis of psycho-physiological practices, represented by Farzeen Baldrian-Hussein. 4) *Neidan* as a range of esoteric

²¹⁰ A rational model, the discussion of which I will omit. In terms of estimating the development of a research field, I have not met attempts in humanities for a model of evaluation. Alexander M. Shneider (2009), a bio-chemist, suggests for such a model of a development of a scientific discipline meant to complement Kuhn. This speculative model divides disciplinary development into four broad stages and discusses also four psychological types of a scholar most optimal for conducting the type of inquiry necessary for each stage. While Shneider's discussion is interesting, I will refrain from introducing it here.

A field mostly in the research area of humanities and social studies, a question of this nature may be considered problematic, particularly when postmodern research orientation has been sceptic on claims of *longue durée*, grand narrative, development or "evolution," and rather being concerned mostly on micro- and local histories, ruptures instead of, and within, assumed continuities. Furthermore, while accumulation of knowledge may be a presumed result of studies, within humanities and social sciences perspective this may be expected contributing rather to increasing understanding as various interpretive layers of a given aspect of study instead of supplying to any definitive explanatory model. Within the qualitative research context one may ask which possibly fruitful interpretive perspectives have been applied to the given subject—in this case *neidan*—at a particular time, location, and as represented by a particular character, text, or lineage.

doctrines and practices, represented by Fabrizio Pregadio. These three correspond mostly to the second and third research programs. 5) *Neidan* as a field of variations of contemplative practice, represented by Clarke Hudson, corresponds to the fourth program, not to say all placed in this program would agree with it. On one level these conceptualizations move clearly on an axis from physiological, also sexual, to more mind-oriented, and between. On this level they also reflect the various ways of understanding *neidan* within the tradition itself. On another level they move between exclusivity and inclusivity, while negotiating of the clarity of definition. This has to do more with understanding *neidan* historically from a scholarly perspective.

What areas of conflict or debate may be discerned, why do these conflicts appear? — I have spotted and highlighted three particular areas of debate. These should be taken only as a few exemplary cases. First area of debate concerns the question of sexual paired cultivation, and particularly the representation of Chen Zhixu as a sexual alchemist. I have suggested that this debate stems from the tradition itself and its distinctions of orthodox and heterodox through discursive practices of inclusion and exclusion. Peculiarly this discussion has followed to the academic discourse concerning claims of what *neidan* "really is." In exclusivist and unitary definitions of *neidan* based on certain definitive *neidan* authors' perspectives, the more marginal type of practices such as the sexual practices tend to be ruled out. Historically, however, the sexual interpretive tradition of alchemical theory seems an existent phenomenon. I've suggested the search for "true" *neidan* may represent essentialist perspectives. The debate on Chen Zhixu as a sexual alchemist may be explained also through differences of interest in research programs: are scholars interested to hermeneutically understand *what* an author tries to say, or do they (also) want to explain *why* an author may want to say that? The second area of "debate" concerns female alchemy as representative of gender-equality and female agency. Here the debate locates not so much in the academia, but more on the surface between academic and more popular *neidan* representations. *Niudan* studies have tried to shed more accurate socio-historical light and a critical reading on the developments leading to the emergence of *niidan* literature and how it has been used for various interests by changing editorial practices. In this discussion the actual female agency has been sought, and it has also been located in alternative spaces by disregarding the oppressive patriarchal social order. A movement from essentialism toward historicism, from hermeneutical toward analytic and critical, and from unitary to variegated representations has been demonstrated. The third issue of debate concerns the problem of the reconstruction of early Quanzhen *neidan*, and the question if there actually ever was one. The problem arises due to the poetic nature of the original early Quanzhen sources, the difficulty to ascertain a *neidan* practice through these sources albeit their language clearly uses *neidan* diction. Attempts to solve the issue have led to more or less speculative reconstructions while leaning on different sources. Here the appropriate, critical use of primary sources and ways of making conclusions based on them have been central. Next, I will address the secondary questions.

What has been studied (history, person, lineage, practice, text, et cetera) and what has been neglected? — To respond this question in sufficient detail would have demanded a different way of constructing the research. Instead, I have offered a sketch, which is the typology of research programs notated with basic information on scholars and their studies. In some more detail I have represented the scholarly discourse in three arenas: early Quanzhen *neidan* locating to the Jurchen Jin dynasty (1115–1237); sexual dual cultivation, which in the case of Chen Zhixu locates into the Yuan dynasty (1260–1368), and more broadly concerns the Ming (1368–1644) and the Qing (1644–1911); and female alchemy which locates mainly in the Qing (1644–1911).²¹¹ Concerning specific authors and texts, some unstudied examples may be named. Some areas of the field are studied but related works are not translated, and vice versa. Certain works again have appeared as a more popular translation. Zhong-Lü lineage is covered rather well by translations,²¹² the study of Baldrian-Hussein (1984) and overview of Kohn (2020). While the *Wuzhen pian* of Zhang Boduan, the claimed founder patriarch of Southern lineage, has been translated several times,²¹³ as well as *Jindan sibaizi*,²¹⁴ and Bai Yuchan has been studied by Wang Li (2004), to my knowledge Southern lineage patriarchs Shi Tai, Xue Daoguang, Chen Nan, and their works are yet rather untouched in the Western scholarship. Neither is anything translated from Bai Yuchan. As we have seen, early Quanzhen is covered by studies, and also translated by Komjathy and others. Li Daochun is studied by Crowe (2004), Chen Zhixu is studied by Hudson (2007). Concerning Wu-Liu lineage, Wu Shouyang is currently being studied by van Enckevort, and has been by Liu Ts'un-yan (1984c). Liu Huayang has been studied and translated by Komjathy (2015). Zhao Bichen, associated with Wu-Liu, is translated and studied by Despeux (1979). Lu Xixing associated with the Eastern branch is studied by Mozias (2020) and Liu Ts'un-yan (1965, 1968), but only shortly translated in Pregadio's *Anthology* (2019). Min Yide and the Longmen of Mount Jiangai is studied by Esposito (1993), as well as the official Longmen lineage of the Qing in various studies (2014). The institutional history of Quanzhen until Qing has been studied by Goossaert. Liu Yiming is studied by Pregadio in several articles and translated by Pregadio and Cleary. *Yin-yang* dual cultivation is studied by Wile (1992), Hudson (2007), Liu Xun (2009). For example, the *shuangxiu* interpretation in the Southern lineage, and associated figures, Liu Yongnian (fl. 1138–1168), Weng Baoguang (fl. 1173), have received scant attention. Lu Xiyue's Western branch has not been properly studied with its sexual cultivation orientations, although the associated *Zhang sanfeng quanji* -textual collection has been studied in terms of its authenticity in relation to Zhang Sanfeng (Wong 1982). *Nüdan* is studied by

²¹¹ I originally intended several appendixes to fill out some aspects concerning the field. One appendix mapped out translated and particularly *untranslated* works according to a late imperial construction of *neidan* lineages, another described and located the available Western language translations of *neidan* and important proto-*neidan* texts. The planned extended bibliography offered a nearly comprehensive list of secondary studies on *neidan* in Western languages. These appendixes are now omitted for reasons of limited space and focus. Perhaps I will have a chance to publish them elsewhere.

²¹² Baldrian-Hussein 1984; Baryosher-Chemouny 1996; Bertschinger 2018, *A Record of the Assembled Immortals and Gathered Perfected of the Western Hills*, London: Singing Dragon; Kohn 2020.

²¹³ Full translation in Davis et al. 1938b, Robinet 1995, and Thomas Cleary, 1987, *Understanding Reality: A Taoist Alchemical Classic*, Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press; partial in Crowe 1997 and Pregadio 2009.

²¹⁴ Davis et al. 1940; Cleary 1986, *The Inner Teachings of Taoism*, Shambhala; and Pregadio 2019.

Despeux, Valussi and Neswald (2007). Little attention has yet been paid to modern and contemporary manifestations apart from Chen Yingning (Liu Xun 2009), and the Healing Tao (Palmer & Siegler 2017). *Neidan* studies have an in-built textual bias as the studies are based on historical textual studies. Contemporary *neidan* as "lived religion" and "embodied practice" is still an area which traditionally textually and historically oriented Western scholarship has been reluctant to touch upon. This would be an area for religious studies oriented scholars with linguistic competence and anthropological methods.

Have neidan studies responded appropriately to the postmodern critiques of humanities and social studies? — The fourth tentative research programme of studying *neidan* in the context of *religion* through interdisciplinary and theoretically diverse approaches from 1990s onward is by definition a response to, and application of, at least some of the critique posed by postmodern reflections on writing culture debate, postcolonial theory, feminist and gender theory, critique of essentialism/religionism, reflexivity and so forth. The works which do not display a few of these reflective features, I have not included in this category, but placed them rather in the "earlier," approaches to the study, by no means less remarkable, particularly, the second," Chinese cultural history, "or the third, "discourse and doctrine" research programs, which have provided most of the fundamental work on the field. It may be that some of the scholarship I have not situated in the fourth research program, as while scholars may practice considerable reflexivity, it has not been an explicit feature of the textual presentation. Also, some have published material during a longer period of time, most obviously Despeux, from 1979 until today. What remains unresponded to postmodern critiques in *neidan* studies, is subject to further development, and therefore a point to be discussed next.

Future prospects of neidan studies — *To which direction should the research be directed in order to be fruitful?* — Interestingly, scholars who have explicitly reflected on future perspectives on *neidan* studies are mostly those involved with study of religion. Komjathy (2007: 4–9) argues at length for discursive space within Daoist studies toward alternative interpretive models, particularly based on study of religion. The hegemonic position, signaled by an achieved professional and institutional status, and delineated by certain cultural constructs, methodological approaches, and corresponding academic control is conventionally associated with sinology, textual study and Chinese area studies. This approach has defined the model and the evaluative criteria (disciplinary commitments) of those studies which are to be taken seriously within the field, including a particular set of skills, languages and knowledge of secondary sources. This research position reduces Daoist traditions, communities, practitioners, and their religious expressions into data for the study of Chinese culture and history, and it has rarely been questioned.²¹⁵ More recently, Daoist studies have begun

²¹⁵ Komjathy points that another prevalent alternative model, which has usually been dismissed or ignored by historians of Chinese Daoism, precisely because the approach is not normative, centers on intellectual history or comparative philosophy. It represents Daoism as a system of "thought," and focuses mostly on the expressions of classical Daoism, not duly recognizing it as a religious tradition.

to include other theoretical and methodological approaches, and the religious studies approach appears particularly promising.²¹⁶ Consequently, it would indicate a major shift in *neidan* studies. While some of the more recent works produced on *neidan* have yet been relatively unreflexive considering methodological and theoretical issues, the level of reflexivity should be expected to increase through a more interdisciplinary approach investigating *neidan* in the context of religion.

Also taking a religious studies approach, Hudson makes an argument on the social history of religion with a general theoretical perspective emphasizing social conflict in the study of religious figures and texts.²¹⁷ This introduces sociology of religion into Daoist studies, applied prominently also by Goossaert in an institutional perspective. Scholars have "too often represented the history of Daoist concepts or texts as an unfolding of ideas themselves, when in fact the main motor of change is social competition" (Hudson: 183). Bringing an explanatory dimension to the interpretive approach in addition to a mere "understanding," Hudson makes an ambitious suggestion that a complete and critical study of any *neidan* "text" (also persons, practices, ideas) should include consideration from seven perspectives. This model includes understanding and interpretation, proper to a hermeneutic humanities approach, but extends to explanations in analytic social scientific terms. (Ibid: 4.)²¹⁸ Concerning areas of study, Hudson suggests that the most urgent task within *neidan* studies is a need for more specific studies on *neidan* texts and *neidan* teachers, and when "enough" such studies have been done, detailed comparison between texts and teachers should be attempted. He also calls for historical and sociological research on the socio-cultural environments in which *neidan* practitioners lived and worked. (Ibid: 668–669.) I affirm these suggestions of Komjathy and Hudson as relevant.

A religious studies model should be further advanced also within the studies on *neidan*. After the approaches on history of scientific thought, the sinological-historical model has for a good reason dominated the field, with later area studies bringing in more multidisciplinary approaches, including particularly the feminist theory. It seems however, that only the religious studies approaches have brought in more air for theoretical discussion and reflexivity in *neidan* studies. Certainly, there will still be resistance for an approach for which the dissertations and later works of Goossaert, Komjathy and Hudson may serve as particularly exemplary. In my view the theoretical refinement of the scholarly discourse is welcome, although this should not be an aim in

²¹⁶ Komjathy writes that "the Sinological approach to Daoist Studies emphasizes the primary contribution of the study of Daoism as relating to a fuller appreciation of Chinese history and culture; in terms of secondary scholarship, it utilizes historical studies in Chinese, English, French, German, Italian, and Japanese, with French and Japanese studies being most influential. In contrast, the comparative religious studies model, as yet not fully developed, focuses on Daoism as a religious tradition deserving of independent study and not reducible to data for the study of Chinese history. In terms of secondary scholarship, this comparative model utilizes various theoretical and methodological insights developed in the interdisciplinary study of religion. Broader issues derived from and applicable to the comparative study of religion play a central role in this approach." (Komjathy 2007: 9.)

²¹⁷ Laid out at length in his dissertation, 2007.

²¹⁸ Establishing the texts or other materials is the philological perspective. Understanding the specialized language in its own terms and translating it into contemporary understanding/idiom is the exegetical perspective. The materials should be further approached and assessed from historical, structural or institutional, discursive, and textuality perspectives (while "religion" is embedded in all). In addition the scholar should maintain self-reflective about one's work. This division, which Hudson elaborates in more depth, would, in my opinion, form a useful model of estimating the scale of research. Though it should not be demanded for each study to reach all these aspects, as long as the aims remain well explicated.

itself, and the intent for understanding the tradition in its own terms should be primary as long as there remains substance for such studies. As Hudson pointed, the immediate need for studies concerns yet the particular teachers and texts—and one should add the historical or imagined lineages.²¹⁹

When trying to conceive what aspects of *neidan* in theoretical-methodological perspective have been approached and what not, one means is to consider what religious phenomena may generally consist of. One can simply take Ninian Smart's dimensions of religion—not again!—as a heuristic measure. (Smart 1998: 11–22.)²²⁰ Such a scheme may help to estimate if a religious phenomenon, in this case *neidan*, is considered and taken account of in a balanced manner. It is somewhat clear, that because of the literary bias on the field, the doctrinal/philosophical and the narrative/mythic dimension—to which much of the repetitive discourse on cosmogony and its inversion may arguably be counted—are well represented, as well as the practical/ritual dimension as many of the texts are dealing with practice of *neidan*. While *neidan* in its roots may be considered a form of late Chinese mysticism,²²¹ and for example certain codified signs and experiences of mystical attainment are reported, moderation regarding the expression of personal experiences is often advocated. Depending on the textual sources, access to and experiential level may be difficult, and while such has been attempted, Eskildsen's work (2004) is a good example how it may be risky business. Ethical/legal dimension gets expression and has been addressed in studies particularly in the conflict between societal norms and the sexual alchemical practice, the invocation of Confucian moral norms in *niidan* texts, as well as a preparatory stage while orientating toward the practice. Social/institutional dimension has been addressed particularly in Goossaert's approach, also in Esposito's work, and its inclusion in the study has been called for by Hudson. Material dimension is clearly the least represented aspect in the tradition, and has in my overall estimation also received the least attention in scholarship. However, an important aspect of this is the body charts such as the *Xiuzhen tu* and the *Neijing tu*, studied in Despeux 2018, Komjathy 2008, 2009, and Neswald 2009. To get a clear image of how these dimensions are addressed and represented in the studies of the field one should reflect them in relation to historical figures, texts, textual corpora, lineages and branches, historical periods and so forth. This level of detail I will not enter here.

In addition to the dimensions of religion, various levels of interpretation and theoretical methodologies may be applied to different aspects of *neidan* tradition—that is, it may serve as illustration for theories—until a certain point of saturation is reached, and from historical,

²¹⁹ However, actual or constructed lineages serve as identity-markers, and such claims should not be taken as rigid realities but read as constructions with fluid borders discursively contested on a competed field of religious practices.

²²⁰ Recalling Smart's categorization, religious phenomena, in general terms, would potentially include in varying proportions: 1) a practical and ritual dimension, 2) an experiential and emotional dimension, 3) a narrative or mythic dimension, 4) a doctrinal and philosophical dimension, 5) an ethical and legal dimension, 6) a social and institutional dimension, and 7) a material dimension. (Smart 1998: 11–22.)

²²¹ Along with Chan Buddhism and Neo-Confucianism.

theoretical, practical, political and other reasons the subject matter loses its value of interest. In addition to comparative studies within *neidan* tradition, when enough specific studies are done, comparative studies between *neidan* and *other traditions and phenomena* become possible, of course then risking for overt generalizations and haphazard readings by less specialized scholars.²²² Studies and translations of *neidan* tradition may become data on the research on "religion" (see Smith 1982), particularly investigations concerning comparative categories of mysticism, esotericism, teacher-disciple traditions, contemplative practice, and body practices. Therefore, one possible move in *neidan* studies would be to consider taking steps toward comparative perspectives on esotericism, drawing from the study of Western esotericism and study of religion. Although this issue is not uncomplicated, it may be noted that at the earlier phases of its development (Song 960–1279, and before) *neidan* was more strictly a lineage-based tradition transmitted from teacher to disciple and based on strict vows of secrecy. Quanzhen developments brought *neidan* teachings more available for a larger audience, and during Ming dynasty (1368–1644), through the increase of literacy in the general populace, the availability of *neidan* texts through printing culture, and the efforts of teachers to simplify and clarify the complicated and arcane teachings, the esoteric nature of transmission undoubtedly moved more aside, while "esotericism" arguably remained as a *strategy* in the field of spiritual market. I will conclude this work with a brief discussion on *neidan* and the comparative term esotericism (in the sense of analogy).

Discussion on *neidan* and esotericism. In the field of *Western esotericism*, a nuanced theoretical-methodological debate has taken place concerning on the scope of the term and the usefulness of "Western" in it.²²³ On historical and terminological grounds, scholars have argued for leaving aside the "West" in the study of esotericism, as it proves a problematically fluid category in terms of its borders and processes of cultural sharing. (Granholm 2013; Asprem 2014; Hanegraaff 2015.) Considering esotericism as a *typological*—instead of *historical*—concept, Egil Asprem has called for an expansion of comparative research, asking: "Why, despite evident structural similarities, are Indian Tantric groups, yogic practice, Zen Buddhism, Taoist alchemy, Amerindian 'shamanic' practices, or Melanesian initiatic societies automatically excluded from analysis in terms of 'esotericism'? Why can we not have a comparative study of esotericism on a truly global rather than a narrowly conceived 'Western' scale?" (Asprem 2015: 5.) Does this allow for making *neidan* relevant for the study of esotericism or vice versa?

"Western esotericism" as a term delineating a field of *historical* study may be regarded as a consequence of professional boundary work and reflecting a "paradigm shift" in the study of religion with a move away from religionist approach toward a historicist one (and at the same time

²²² Probably a sinologist's nightmare.

²²³ See for example Granholm 2013; Asprem 2014; Hanegraaff 2012, 2015, 2016. It will be unnecessary here to try any definitive assessment on this disciplinary discourse, but I will address it shortly and as far as concerns the possibilities of comparative studies in terms of esotericism which could include *neidan*.

defending against "reductionist" natural scientific perspectives) through commitment to a methodological agnosticism. (Asprem 2014: 7–11; Hanegraaff 2015: 56–58.) For related reasons, structural cross-cultural comparison has in last decades been viewed with suspicion in the historical research programmes of study of esotericism.²²⁴ Instead of focusing on a strictly historical and Western genealogical comparative study, which has been favored, analogical comparison would allow attending to "structural similarities with phenomena that originate in other historical, cultural and geographic contexts" (Asprem 2014: 5). Asprem argues that, apart from disciplinary strategy, no methodological reasons allow for historically oriented scholarship to neglect analogical comparison, and including both methodologies would be important to the theoretical development of the field. Such a move would enable cross-cultural, typological comparativity, while yet holding on to the established historicist foundation in the study of esotericism. It would provide disciplinary space for approaches such as sociology, anthropology and cognitive science within the study of esotericism, and give way for possible explanatory models, responding to questions "why?" (Asprem 2014: 7, 15–18, 23–24; Hanegraaff 2015: 80–81.)

Rather than abandoning "Western esotericism" as a historical concept, with its established academic institutions, Hanegraaff suggests esotericism should instead be explored as a comparative typological term within the broader field of *study of religion*—which it already is (2015: 86–87). "Western esotericism," as a historical and genealogical term is, then, employed to research the traditions, texts, people, practices, institutions, and so forth, which have been polarized as the polemic "other" of the rational Enlightenment heritage, particularly in the context of the "West." It is clear that Western esotericism as such a historical concept does not genealogically cover religious phenomena situating culturally and geographically as far as *neidan*—except in the cases of cultural sharing. But as a *typological term* "esotericism" can be used *heuristically* in the service of other goals, possibly of a more general import. (Asprem 2014: 15.)²²⁵ While it remains to see which steps Western esotericism as a field takes in the near future, the concept of "esotericism," defined typologically, remains explorable as a comparative category within the study of religion.

How could *neidan* studies, then, benefit of, or participate in, analogical comparisons in terms of "esotericism"? I will exemplify three ways of employing analogical comparison.²²⁶ "Esotericism" could be used as *tertium comparationis*²²⁷ to compare *neidan* with other phenomena in terms of their "esoteric features," for example defined along sociology of secrecy (esotericism as

²²⁴ "The origin of this suspicion is obvious enough: it has been a reaction to the eclectic use of comparison in 'religionist' scholarship that, under the influence of perennialism and Traditionalism, aimed at establishing cross-cultural similarities pointing to a universal 'esoteric core' of all religions." (Asprem 2014: 5.)

²²⁵ There are also other ways of employing esotericism outside the context of the "West," such as "esoteric discourse" (von Stuckrad)—as claims for perfect knowledge and means for achieving it—potentially more interesting, but I will only shortly address the comparative possibilities.

²²⁶ Note, *neidan* would *not* be compared to "Western esotericism" as defined by the six Faivrean characteristics, for they have no genealogical connection. Faivre describes a historical category.

²²⁷ *Tertium comparationis*: in order to compare anything at all, an intuitive category of similarity will be established, which will enable comparing two or more objects as similar or dissimilar. See for example Hanegraaff 2016b: 598–602; Asprem 2014: 20–27.

secrecy, functioning as a strategic "social capital"), where esotericism is placed within a cross-cultural framework and one focuses on its socio-political implications (Urban 1997: 2). The questions asked would be of general nature and pertain to interests of "sociologically oriented comparative history of religion" (Asprem 2014: 16). Phenomena to be compared with *neidan* need not pertain to "Western esoteric currents." Such an approach would bring perspectives of sociology of religion into historically oriented *neidan* studies and help better understand the social and political contexts of *neidan* authors, if not *neidan* itself. This approach is applied by Hudson (2007). *Neidan* would serve as data for studying social dynamics of religious actors, insights could be gained from other similar phenomena, and this could help to pay attention to new issues in *neidan* tradition. Another comparative prospect involving "esotericism" and "*neidan*" would be simply to compare Western esoteric currents to *neidan* with regard to some other feature as *tertium comparationis*,²²⁸ with a research interest in aspects of "religion." One could for instance compare the developing of an "immortal spirit" in the *neidan* of the Zhong-Lü corpus and George Ivanovich Gurdjieff's (1866–1949) Fourth way teaching, in which case the interest would be more on the ontological questions; or one could compare the role of sexual intercourse in Li Xiyue's (1806–1856) Western branch yin-yang cultivation ("sexual alchemy") and in sexual magic of Paschal Beverly Randolph (1825–1875), with the interest more in embodied practice. "Internal alchemy" could also be used as a comparative category for the practice of the Italian magus Cagliostro (1743?–1795) and for example that of Wu Shouyang (1574–1644).²²⁹ Third perspective, also interesting for study of *neidan* itself, would be to apply "esotericism" as a comparative category within *neidan* tradition, and compare for instance Chen Zhixu's *neidan* (Yuan) to that of Fu Jinquan (Qing), and Chen Yingning (Republican era). Of course, many other kinds of comparative possibilities appear if *neidan* is approached from study of religion perspective alone, without the application of "esotericism" as a category.

Opposing voices for such comparativist perspectives should be expected from some specialists of *neidan*, dedicated to the study of the historical *neidan* tradition as specific, unique, embedded in a specific cultural environment, locality and time. Concerning the study of *neidan*, it is the historical and sinologist research programs which have held the hegemonic position to say and define what *neidan* is about. And that is entirely relevant. Perhaps room could be made also for comparative approaches and theoretical sophistication in order to bring these specifics into perspective.

²²⁸ See Asprem 2014: 23.

²²⁹ See Moore, "Gurdjieff, George Ivanovitch," in *The Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, pp. 445–450. Contains no reference to a development of a spiritual body, though. See Deveney, "Paschal Beverly Randolph and Sexual Magic," in *Hidden Intercourse – Eros and Sexuality in the History of Western Esotericism*, pp. 355–367. See Introvigne, "Cagliostro, Alessandro di (ps. of Giuseppe Balsamo)," in *The Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, p. 225–227.

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²³⁰ While the scope of this work encompasses all *neidan* studies in Western languages until today, mentioned here are only those works particularly referred to in the text.

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APPENDIX

List of Chinese terms, names, and texts mentioned

- Bai Yuchan 白玉蟾 (1194–1229?): the actual founder of the Southern lineage (Nanzong) of *neidan*
- baojuan* 寶卷 ("precious scrolls") : a literature genre, texts of religious and mystical nature produced within the context of folk religion
- Caizhen jiyao* 採真機要 (Secret Essentials on Gathering Perfection) : a "sexual alchemical" text attributed to Zhang Sanfeng; trl. Wile 1992
- Cao Heng 曹珩 [fl.1631] : a physician who published a medical text dealing with female cultivation as a section in the work *Baosheng miyao* 保生祕要 (Essential Secrets for Conserving Life); also a proponent of *neidan* involving sexual practices
- Cantong qi* 參同契 (The Seal of the Unity of the Three) —> see *Zhouyi cantong qi*
- Chang Po-Tuan —> see Zhang Boduan
- Changchun Qiu zhenren ji xizhou daoyou shu* 長春丘真人寄西州道友書 (Writings Sent by Perfected Qiu Changchun to Daoist Friends in Xizhou)
- Chao Yu-ch'in —> see Zhao Youqin (fl. 1329)
- Chen Nan 陳楠 (?–1213) : fourth patriarch of the Southern Lineage (Nanzong)
- Chen Pu 陳朴 : an obscure *neidan* master, author of *Chen xiansheng neidan jue* 陳先生內丹訣
- Chen Yingning 陳撓寧 (1880–1969) : a Republican era innovator of modern Daoism and *neidan*
- Chen Zhixu 陳致虛 (1290–1343+ or ca. 1368) : focuses on merging the doctrines of the Northern and Southern lineages, seen as a representative of the yin-yang branch of *neidan*
- Ch'iu Ch'u-chi —> see Qiu Chuji
- Chongyang fenli shihua ji* 重陽分梨十化集 (Chongyang's Anthology on Ten Conversions by Dividing Pears) : an anthology of poems of Wang Chongyang, preface dates 1183
- Chongyang jiaohua ji* 重陽教化集 (Chongyang's Anthology on Teaching and Conversion) : anthology of poetry between Wang Chongyang and Ma Danyang, preface 1183
- Chongyang zhenren jinguan yusuo jue* 重陽真人金關玉鎖訣 (*Perfected Chongyang's Instructions on the Gold Pass and Jade Lock*) : a *Quanzhen neidan* text putatively attributed to Wang Chongyang; trl. Komjathy 2007
- Chongyang quanzhen ji* 重陽全真集 (Chongyang's Anthology of Complete Perfection) : Anthology of poetry by Wang Chongyang, the founder of Quanzhen, preface 1188
- Ch'üan-Chen —> see Quanzhen
- Dadan zhizhi* 大丹直指 (Direct Pointers to the Great Elixir) : a Quanzhen *neidan* text putatively attributed to Qiu Chuji; trl. Komjathy 2013
- Danyang zhenren yulu* 丹陽真人語錄 (Discourse Record of Perfected Danyang) : compiled by Wang Yizhong 王頤中, one of Ma Danyang's disciples, around ca. 1185
- Dao 道 : the ultimate concern of the Daoist traditions, including *neidan*

Daode jing 道德經 (Scripture of the Dao and its Power) : the main text of classical Daoism

daojia 道家 (family, or lineage, of the way) : an alternate term historically referring to the Daoist tradition; initially used as a bibliographical category for books such as the *Daode jing*

daojiao 道教 (teachings of the way) : an alternate term historically referring to the Daoist tradition; transmission of teachings within an institutionalized setting

daoshu 道術 (arts of the Way) : refers to Daoist ways and arts, practices which may be undertaken under a formal religious, lay organization, or individually

Daoshu 道樞 (Pivot of the Dao) : a large compendium of texts dealing with *neidan* and *yangsheng* assembled by Zeng Zao 增慥 (fl. 1131–1155)

daoyin 導引 — (“guiding and stretching”) : healing exercises and gymnastics

Daoyuan yiqi 道元一氣 (Unitary Qi of the Original Dao) : a text on *neidan* sexual cultivation written by Cao Heng and published in 1636

Daozang —> see *Zhengtong Daozang*

Daozang jiyao 道藏輯要 (*Essentials of the Daoist Canon*) : originally compiled around 1800, expanded in 1906 as Chongkan Daozang jiyao 重刊道藏輯要, with portions added until 1929

Daozang xubian 道藏續編 (Supplementary Collection of the Daoist Canon): compiled and published on Mount Jin’gai by Min Yide (1758–1836) in 1834.

Dongpai 東派 (Eastern branch) : branch of *neidan* associated to Lu Xixing and involving sexual practices

fangzhong shu 房中術 (“bedroom arts”) : sexual practices, not involving the arduous *neidan* process

foxing 佛性 (“buddhata,” “Buddha-nature”)

Fenli shihua ji (Anthology of the Ten Stages of Pear-Slicing) —> see *Chongyang fenli shihua ji*

Fu Jinquan 傅金銓 (1765–1836/1844) : influenced by Lu Xixing, a proponent of a form of *neidan* including sexual practice, editor of the first *nüdan* collection *Nü jindan fayao*

Fu Shan 傅山 (1606–1684) : a physician who received a female cultivation text *Duan hong long* 斷紅龍 (Beheading the Red Dragon) through spirit-writing

Guandi 關帝 or Guan Yu 關羽 (Emperor Guan) : a historical military figure, later a divine general

Hao Datong 郝大通 (1140–1213) : one of the Seven perfected of Quanzhen

Hao Ta-t’ung —> Hao Datong

He Longxiang (fl. 1900–1906) 賀龍驤 : editor of *Nüdan hebian* collection and the *Daozang jiyao* expanded in 1906

houtian 後天 (“postcelestial”) : opposite to *xiantian* 先天 (“precelestial”), an ontological state after manifestation, postnatal in the sense of acquired qualities and energies

Hsieh Tao-Kuang [sic] —> *Xue Daoguang*

hua 化 (“transformation”) : refers to the *neidan* transformation process, essence —> qi —> spirit —> Dao

huandu 環堵 (“entering a meditation enclosure”) : in Quanzhen practice a phase of contemplative isolation

huanjing bunao 還精補腦 (“reverting the essence to nourish the brain”) : a technique of guiding the refined essence up along the *dumai* 督脈 channel, may or may not involve sexual practice

huang po 黃婆 (yellow dame) : a term for the intermediary in *neidan*, often referring to the function of intent (*yi* 意), in sexual interpretation may refer to a female procurer

Huangting jing 黃庭經 (Scripture of the Yellow Court) : the textual foundation of earlier meditational practices and one of the most popular and influential Daoist scriptures; trl. Michael Saso, *The Gold Pavilion: Taoist Ways to Peace, Healing, and Long Life*, 1995

huanle 歡樂 (“inner joy”)

Huanyuan pian 還源篇 (Folios of Reverting to the Source) : a Southern Lineage *neidan* text by Shi Tai (?-1158)

Huiming jing 慧命經 (Scripture on Wisdom and Life-Destiny) : a text of the Wu-Liu branch presumably by Liu Huayang (1735–1799), trl. Komjathy 2015

Hundun 渾沌 (Chaos) : primordial chaos in Chinese cosmology; in *Zhuangzi's* parable the emperors of the South Sea and the North Sea drill seven openings to the emperor of the central region, Hundun (undifferentiation, chaos), who then dies

Hutian xingguo nüdan shize 壺天性果女丹十則 (Ten principles on female alchemy by the fruit of inner nature of Gourd Heaven) : a nüdan text in *Nüdan hebian* 女丹合編 collection (1906)

ji 集 (anthology) : a literary genre

ji 記 (record) : a literary genre

Jiaohua ji (Anthology of Religious Conversions) —> see *Chongyang jiaohua ji*

Jin 金 (1115–1234) dynasty

Jin zhenren yulu 晉真人語錄 (*Discourse Record of Perfected Jin*) : this Quanzhen work has similarities with Zhong-Lü texts

jindan 金丹 (golden elixir) : synonym to *neidan*, may refer to *waidan* as well

Jindan dacheng ji 金丹大成集 (The Great Achievement of the Golden Elixir) : *neidan* text by Xiao Tingshi 蕭廷芝 (fl.1260), disciple of Peng Si 彭耜 (fl.1217–1251)

Jindan dayao 金丹大要 (Great essentials of the Golden Elixir) —> see *Shangyangzi jindan dayao*

Jindan jieyao 金丹節要 (*Summary of the Golden Elixir*) : a sexual alchemical text attributed to Zhang Sanfeng; trl. Wile 1992

Jindan jiuzheng pian 金丹就正篇 (Chapters on the Proper Understanding of the Golden Elixir) : a "sexual alchemical" text by Lu Xixing (1520–1606); trl. Pregadio 2019, Wile 1992

Jindan sibaizi 金丹四百字 (Four Hundred Characters on the Golden Elixir) : a concise symbolic work on alchemical practice attributed to Zhang Boduan; trl. Pregadio 2019

Jindan zhenchuan 金丹真傳 (Perfect Transmission of the Golden Elixir) : a sexual alchemical text by Sun Ruzhong (fl. 17th c.); trl. Wile 1992

jindan zhi dao 金丹之道 (the way of the golden elixir) : a common term used by *neidan* adepts of their own practice

Jin'gai shan 金蓋山 (Mount Jingai) : center of Min Yide's Yunchao 雲巢 Longmen branch

jing 精 ("essence") : postcelestial essence refers to vital liquids of the body, notably blood and semen; precelestial essence refers to an intangible storage of vitality (*yuanjing*)

jing 精, *qi* 氣, *shen* 神 : essence, *qi* ("breath"), and spirit, the three treasures used as the raw ingredients of *neidan* practice, later *neidan* takes their precelestial qualities as its substance

Jiyizi zhengdao mishu shiqi zhong 濟一子證道秘書十七種 (Seventeen Daoist books by Jiyizi) : Fu Jiquan's main collection of works

jue 訣 (instruction) : a literary genre

kan 坎 (water) : trigram ䷜, yang within yin, equalling to outer medicine

Kundao gongfu cidi 坤道功夫次第 (Stages of Alchemical Work on the Way of the Female) : Fourteen poems attributed to Sun Bu'er and concerning female alchemy. Trl. Despeux 2013, Cleary 1989.

Laozi —> see *Daode jing*

li 離 (fire) : trigram ䷝, yin within yang

Li Daochun 李道純 (fl. ca. 1288) : author of the *Zhonghe ji*, seen later as representative of the Central branch of *neidan* (Zhongpai)

Li Niwan 李泥丸 : a mysterious Longmen sage

Li Xiyue 李西月 (1806–1856) : associated with Western branch (Xipai) of *neidan*

Lingbao bifa 靈寶畢法 (Complete Methods of the Numinous Treasure) : a Zhong-Lü text attributed to Zhongli Quan, probably dating from early Northern Song (960–1126);

trl. Kohn 2020.

Liu Chuxuan 劉處玄 (1147–1203) : one of the Seven perfected of Quanzhen

Liu Huayang 柳華陽 (1735–1799) : representative of the Wu-Liu lineage, writer of the *Huiming jing*

Liu Yiming 劉一明 (1734–1821) : a Longmen master

Liu Yongnian 劉永年 (fl. 1138–1168) : a Southern lineage master associated with the yin-yang branch, sexual interpretation of *neidan*

Longhu jing 龍虎經 (Scripture of the Dragon and Tiger) : has a complicated editorial relation to the texts *Zhouyi cantong qi*, *Jinbi jing* 金碧經 and *Qiantong jue* 潛通訣, *Longhu jing* may be regarded as a paraphrase of the *Cantong qi*, and the two names have referred to the same text until Song dynasty

Longmen 龍門 (Dragon Gate) : main lineage of Complete perfection since the Qing dynasty

lu 錄 : a literary genre

Lu Hsi-hsing —→ see Lu Xixing

Lu Xixing 陸西星 (1520–1601 or 1606) : a *neidan* master associated with the Eastern branch (Dongpai)

lun 論 (discourse) : a literary genre

Lü Tung-pin —→ see Lü Dongbin

Lü Dongbin 呂洞賓: a semilegendary immortal at the source of many *neidan* lineages

Lüzu 呂祖 (Ancestor Lü) —→ see Lü Dongbin

Ma Danyang —→ Ma Yu

Ma Yu 馬鈺 (1123–84) : one of the Seven perfected of Quanzhen

Miao Shanshi 苗善時 (fl.1324) : a presumed Quanzhen proponent of the Yuan dynasty, writer of *Chunyang dijun shenhua miatong ji* 純陽帝君神化妙通紀 (Chronicle of Imperial Lord Chunyang's Divine Transformations and Marvelous Penetrations)

Min Yide 閔一得 (1758–1836) : patriarch of a Longmen subsect in Mount Jin'gai, editor of two *nüdan* texts published in his *Daozang xubian* 道藏續編 (Supplementary Collection of the Daoist Canon)

ming 命 (life, existence) : in *neidan* should be cultivated together with *xing* (inner nature), refers to Daoism as opposed to Buddhism, to physiological practice as opposed to quiescence, body as opposed to mind

Ming 明 (1368–1644) dynasty

Nanhua jing —→ see *Zhuangzi*

Nannü dangong yitong bian 男女丹功異同辨 (Differences and similarities in the alchemical work of men and women) : a *nüdan* work collated by Yan Zehuan, a female Daoist practitioner

Nanzong 南宗 (Southern lineage) : lineage of *neidan* beginning with Zhang Boduan's *Wuzhen pian*, however Bai Yuchan may be regarded to have actually coined the Southern lineage

neidan 內丹 (internal elixir, internal alchemy) : a tradition of Chinese alchemy in which the alchemical laboratory and the ingredients are taken as internal, within the practitioner's person; a family of self-cultivation discourses and related practices

Neijing tu 內經圖 (Diagram of Internal Pathways) : a stele depicting Daoist subtle physiology and *neidan* practice dated to 1886, attributed to Liu Chengyin (fl. 1870–1890), trl. Komjathy 2009

nei tan —→ see *neidan*

Niwan Li zushi nüzhong shuangxiu baofa 泥丸李祖師女宗雙修寶筏 (Precious Raft of Female Dual Cultivation According to Master Li Niwan) : a *nüdan* text associated with Li Niwan, transmitted in 1795 through Shen Yibing (1708–1786) in a spirit-writing séance; trl. Wile 1992

nüdan 女丹 (female alchemy) : a specific form of *neidan* for women

Nüdan hebian 女丹合編 (Collection of Female Alchemy) : a collection of texts of Daoist physiological practices for women compiled by He Longxiang, and published in 1906

Nüdan hebian xuanzhu 女丹合編選注 (Annotated Selections from *Nüdan hebian*) : an abridged version of *Nüdan hebian* published in 1991

Nüdan jicui 女丹集萃 (Collection of female alchemy) : a collection of *nüdan* texts edited by Tao Bingfu and published in 1989

Nügong zhengfa 女功正法 (Correct Methods for Women's Practice) : An abridged version edited and revised by Chen Yingning in 1935 of an earlier *nüdan* text called *Zengbu jinhua zhizhi nügong zhengfa* 增補金華直指女功正法 (Augmented direct instructions of golden flower on the proper methods for female practice), written in 1880, and attributed to He Xiangtu, trl. Wile 1992

Nü jindan fayao 女金丹法要 (Essential Methods of Female Golden Elixir) : a collection of *nüdan* texts edited by Fu Jinquan

Nü jindan 女金丹 (Women's Golden Elixir) : a *nüdan* text written in 1892 by Zhenyizi 真一子 and exceptionally not a product of spirit-writing; trl Despeux 2013

Nüzi daoqiao congshu 女子道教叢書 (Collection of Daoist Writings for Women) : a collection containing about ten *nüdan* texts by Yi Xinying 易心螢 (1896–1976)

Nüzi daoxue xiao congshu wuzhong 女子道學小叢書五種 (Small Encyclopedia in Five Books on the Female Learning of the Dao) : a *nüdan* collection edited by Chen Yingning, 1936

Panxi ji 潘溪集 (Anthology from Panxi) : anthology of poems and lyrics, contains the only extant writings unproblematically attributed to Qiu Changchun, prefaces 1186 / ca. 1208

Panshan Qiyun Wang zhenren yulu 盤山棲雲王真人語錄 (Discourse Record of Perfected Wang Qiyun of Mount Pan) : presents itself as the discourse record of Wang Zhijin, a disciple first of Hao Guangning and later of Qiu Changchun, preface 1247

Panshan yulu —> *see Panshan Qiyun Wang zhenren yulu*

Peng Xiao 彭曉 (?–955) : author of *Zhouyi cantong qi fengzhang tong zhenyi* 周易參同契分章通真義 (Real Meaning of the *Zhouyi cantong qi*), the first extant *neidan* commentary to the *Cantong qi*

pu 朴 (“simplicity”)

qi 氣 (“breath,” “pneuma”) : postcelestial *qi* refers to the ordinary breathing (outer breath, martial fire) and the postnatal acquired *qi*; precelestial *qi* refers to (inner breath, civil fire) refined breathing corresponding more to thought and intent (*yi*) and spontaneous circulation of *qi* as a subtle life force

qian 乾 (“heaven”) : trigram ☰ representing the undivided pure yang, the accomplished elixir

qigong 氣功 (“practice of *qi*”) : a product of twentieth century, with roots in earlier traditions, in modern meaning encompasses *yangsheng*, martial arts and therapeutic techniques

Qing 清 (1644–1911) dynasty

Qinghe zhenren beiyu yulu 清和真人北遊語錄 (Discourse Record of Perfected Qinghe during Northward Travels) : a discourse record containing the teachings of Yin Zhiping, a disciple of Liu Changsheng and Qiu Changchun

Qinghua biwen 青華秘文 (*Secret Texts of Qinghua*) —> *Yuqing jinsi qinghua biwen jinbao neilian danjue*

qingjing 清靜 (clarity and stillness)

Qingjing jing 清靜經 (Scripture on Clarity and Stillness) : a contemplative text dating from the Tang, revered by the Southern lineage and the Quanzhen masters

Qingjing yuanjun Kunyuan jing 清靜元君坤元經 (Scripture on the Origin of Kun by the Pure and Quiet Princess of the Origin) : a *nüdan* text from Fu Jingquan's collection, may be the first *nüdan* text

qingke 頃刻 (“in one instant”)

qingxiu 情修 (pure cultivation or solo cultivation) : interpretation of *neidan*, which considers that the outer medicine is found within one's own being and not in that of the "other," *neidan* cultivation not involving sexual intercourse unlike *shuangxiu*

Qiu Chuji 邱處機 (1148–1227) : one of Seven perfected, attributed founder of Longmen

Qizhen 七真 (Seven Perfected) : the canonized main disciples of Wang Chongyang

Quanzhen 全真 (Complete Perfection) : a school of Daoism founded by Wang Chongyang, one of the two main forms of Daoism today

Quanzhen ji —> *Chongyang Quanzhen ji*

rengui 壬癸 (menstruation) : a *nüdan* term, refers to the process of menstrual bleeding, indicates two phases, the appearance of the medicine, and the actual bleeding

Ruyao jing 入藥鏡 (Mirror for Compounding the Medicine) : a text attributed to Cui Xifan 崔希范 (ca. 880–940) lays out the basic elements of *neidan*; trl. Pregadio 2013

sanfeng caizhan 三峰採戰 ("gathering and battling at the three peaks") : technique of the bedroom arts for collecting female *jingqi* at the mouth, breasts, and the vulva

Shangqing ji 上清集 (Collected Works Written at the Shangqing Temple) : a text by Bai Yuchan with information on temples, monasteries, and persons

Shangqing 上清 (Highest Clarity) : originally a set of scriptures revealed to Yang Xi 楊羲 (330–86), later a school of Daoism found by Tao Hongjing 陶弘景 (456–536)

Shang-Yang Tzu —> see Chen Zhixu

Shangyangzi Jindan dayao 上陽子金丹大要 (Shangyangzi's Great Essentials of the Golden Elixir) : A monumental compendium of *neidan* by Chen Zhixu

shen 神 (spirit) : postcelestial spirit refers to the discursive mind, precelestial spirit refers to the potential of awareness as *yinshen* 陰神 and *yangshen* 陽神

Shen Yibing 沈一炳 (1708–1786) : Min Yide's master

Shi Tai 石泰 (?–1158) : the second patriarch of the Southern lineage of *neidan*

Shih Hsing-Lin —> Shi Tai (Shi Xinglin)

shijie 尸解 ("release from the corpse") : a form of liberation in which the practitioner transcends by leaving a decoy object such as a sword behind to imitate a corpse

shuangxiu 雙修 (paired practice, dual cultivation) : refers to a type of *neidan* including sexual cultivation

Song 宋 (960–1279) dynasty

Sun Bu'er 崑秦性 (1119–1183) : the only female of the Seven perfected of Quanzhen

Sun Ruzhong 孫汝忠 (fl. 1615) : a Ming sexual alchemist, author of *Jindan Zhenchuan*

Taiyin lianxing ge 太陰煉形歌 (Song for the Sublimation of the Supreme Yin Constitution) : nine poems concerning *nüdan* methods by Liu Mingrui 劉名瑞 (1839–1932) ; trl. Despeux 2013 in French

Tan Chuduan 譚處端 (1123–1185) : one of the Seven perfected of Quanzhen

T'an Ch'u-tuan —> Tan Chuduan

Tang 唐 (618–907) dynasty

tianguan 天官 ("celestial official") : a rank of otherworldly bureaucracy

tiangui 天癸 (celestial water) : a synonym for the original *qi* (*yuanqi*) in women

Tianshi 天師 (Celestial masters) : refers to an early Daoist religious institution of Tianshi dao and to a presumed lineage leading the origins of modern Zhengyi 正一 (Orthodox unity) Daoism back to Zhang Daoling 張道陵 of the second century

Tiantai shan 天臺山 (Mount Tiantai) : a mountain in Zhejiang with a long Daoist history

tianxian 天仙 (celestial immortal) : highest rank of immortals, aim of *neidan*

T'ien-T'ai —> see Tiantai shan

Ts'an T'ung Ch'i —> see Cantong *qi*

waidan 外丹 (external elixir, or external alchemy) : a range of doctrines and practices focused on compounding of elixirs whose ingredients are minerals, metals, and sometimes plants, originates in Han dynasty

waiyao 外藥 (outer medicine) : the precelestial one *qi*, in pure cultivation found within one's own being, in sexual interpretation found from the "other"

Wang Chongyang 王重陽 (1113–1170) : the founder of Complete perfection (Quanzhen) Daoism

Wang Chuyi 王處一 (1142–1217) : one of the Seven perfected

Wang Shizhen 王世貞 (1526–1590) : a scholar of Ming dynasty, a practicing Daoist and Buddhist

Wang Zhe ——> see Wang Chongyang

Wei Boyang 魏伯陽 : a legendary Han dynasty immortal, who according to tradition wrote the *Cantong qi*

Weisheng Shenglixue Mingzhi 衛生生理學明指 : a Wu-Liu text by Zhao Bichen (1860–after 1933); trl. Despeux 1979 in French

Wenchang 文昌 : a Daoist deity manifesting in spirit-writing séances

Weng Baoguang 翁葆光 (fl. 1173) : a Southern lineage master associated with sexual interpretation of *neidan* through Chen Daling 陳達陵

Wu Chên P'ien ——> see *Wuzhen pian*

Wu-Liu pai 伍柳派 (Wu-Liu branch) : a Qing dynasty lineage of internal alchemy

Wu Shouyang 伍守陽 (1574–1644) : a Ming dynasty *neidan* master at the root of Wu-Liu lineage

Wu Wu 吳悟 (fl. 1163) : writer of *Zhigui ji* 指歸集 (Collection of Basic Explanations), knew *waidan* and *neidan*

Wugen shu 無根樹 : a *neidan* poem with sexual imagery attributed to Zhang Sanfeng; trl. Wile 1992

wuwei 無為 ("nonaction," "non-interference") : term derives from the *Daode jing*

Wuyi ji 武夷集 (Anthology of [the Abbey of Mount] Wuyi) : a ritual text in *Xiuzhen shishu* 修真十書 collection

Wuzhen pian 悟真篇 (Chapters on Awakening to Reality) : a Southern lineage text by Zhang Boduan, written around 1075; trl. Pregadio 2009

xiantian 先天 (precelestial) : denotes ontological stage before manifestation, "prenatal" in the sense of inherent qualities and energies

xiantian yiqi 先天一氣 (precelestial one breath)

xiao zhoutian 小周天 (small heavenly cycle) : in *neidan*, the circulation of the outer medicine along the route formed by *dumai* and *renmai* channels to refine it

xin 心 (mind, heart)

xing 性 ("nature") : one's precosmic and perennial inborn nature, contrasts *ming* (life) in *xingming*; represents Buddhism, mind, and contemplation

Xingming guizhi 性命圭旨 (Teachings on the Joint Cultivation of Nature and Life) : late imperial *neidan* text first printed in 1615, but later expanded, and then containing teachings on sexual practices

xingqi 行氣 (circulating breath) : in pre-*neidan* sources associated often with gymnastics and the retention of breathing, later to guidance of the inner breath with intention (*yi*)

Xipai 西派 (Western branch) : a late *neidan* branch associated with Li Xiyue (1806–1856)

Xiuzhen shishu 修真十書 (Ten Books on the Cultivation of Perfection) : a compendium containing many texts of Bai Yuchan and his circle

Xiuzhen taiji hunyuan tu 修真太極混元圖 (Diagrams on the Mystery of Ultimate and Primordial Chaos for the Cultivation of True Nature) : an illustrated treatise of the Zhong-Lü tradition by Xiao Daocun 蕭道存 (fl. 13th century); Trl. Baryosher-Chemouny, *La quête de l'immortalité en Chine: Alchimie et paysage intérieur sous les Song*. Paris: Editions Dervy, 1996.

- Xiuzhen tu* 修真圖 (Diagram of Cultivating Perfection) : a diagram depicting the Daoist body in terms of alchemical and cosmological principles probably dating from the early 19th century; trl Despeux 2018
- Xiawangmu nüxiu zhengtú shíze* 西王母女修正途十則 (Ten Rules from the Queen Mother of the West on the Proper Path of Female Cultivation) : the already deceased Shen Yibing (1708–86),²³¹ the teacher of the eleventh Longmen (Dragon Gate) patriarch Min Yide (1758–1836), transmitted this *niidan* text, attributed to Lü Dongbin, through a female medium in a spirit séance in 1795; trl Wile 1992
- Xuanfeng qinghui lu* 玄風慶會錄 (Record of Celebrated Meetings of Mysterious Winds) : a record of Qiu Changchun’s famous “westward journey” to meet Chinggis Qan, (Genghis Khan; ca. 1162–1227) supplementing the accounts provided in the *Xiyou ji* and *Xiyou lu*, preface dates 1232
- Xuanwei xinyin* 玄微心印 (Heart-to-Heart Transmission of the Mysterious and the Delicate) : a sexual alchemical text written by a group of practitioners and attributed to the Eastern branch, dating possibly from Ming
- Xue Daoguang 薛道光 (1078?–1191) : the third patriarch of the Southern lineage of *neidan*
- Yan Zehuan 顏澤環 (fl. ca. 1880-1906) : a female Daoist practitioner, author of *Nannü dangong yitong bian*
- yang 陽 : complementary to *yin*, a cosmological term meaning originally the sunny side of a hill, refers to masculine, men, pure, light
- yangqi quanshen 養氣全神 (“nurturing the *qi* to complete the spirit”)
- yangshen 陽神 (*yang*-spirit) : a spiritual “body” developed through *neidan* cultivation, capable of transcendence
- yangsheng 養生 (“nourishing life”) : longevity techniques based on essence, *qi*, and spirit, grounded on physiological, psychological, and behavioral principles; include gymnastics, massage, breathing, sexual hygiene, diets, healing, meditation, visualization, and rules of daily behavior
- Yi Xinying 易心螢 (1896–1976) : an abbot of a monastery in Mount Qingcheng who assembled about ten *niidan* texts
- Yijing* 易經 (Book of Changes) : originally a manual of divination, later a source of wisdom and cosmological lore, its elements are used in the *neidan* discourse
- yin 陰 : complementary to *yang*, a cosmological term meaning originally the shady side of a hill, denotes qualities such as feminine, women, impure, dark
- yindan 陰丹 (“sexual alchemy,” or “female elixir”) : a term denoting *neidan* which includes sexual techniques in some phases of the practice
- Yinfu jing* 陰符經 (Scripture of the Hidden Accordance) : a Daoist classic revered by *neidan* masters and interpreted in *neidan* terms
- yinyang pai 陰陽派 (*yin-yang* branch) : an anachronistic category for the type of *neidan* including sexual practices
- Yinxian pai 隱仙派 (Hidden immortals branch): Western branch of internal alchemy associated with Li Xiyue (1806–1856)
- yinyang shuangxiu 陰陽雙修 (*yinyang* dual cultivation) : refers to a type of *neidan* including sexual cultivation
- yu shen he dao 與神合道 (joining one’s spirit with the Dao) : an expression of the aim of *neidan*
- Yu Yan 俞琰 (1258–1314) : author of a major commentary to the *Cantong qi*, the *Cantong qi fahui*,
- Yuan 元 (1260–1368) dynasty

²³¹ Komjathy (2003) identifies Shen Qiyun 沈棲雲 a female disciple of Min Yide’s with the same years, but seems to be wrong. Valussi (2003) identifies Shen Yibing (1708–86) as the one who wrote the text down and edited it in 1795, not mentioning that he was already dead at this time. So there is confusion regarding this matter.

yuanqi 元氣 (Original Pneuma) : precelestial state of *qi*

Yulong ji 玉隆集 (Collected Works Written in the Yulong Temple) : a text by Bai Yuchan, contains a biography of Xu Xun 許遜, a Jingming dao 淨明道 patriarch

yulu 語錄 (discourse record) : a literary genre

yunü shu 御女術 ("the art of mounting women") : a term referring to bedroom arts in distinction to *neidan*

Yuqing jinsi qinghua biwen jinbao neilian danjue 玉清金笥青華秘文金寶內鍊丹訣 (Alchemical Formula for the Inner Purification of the Golden Treasure; Secret Writings from the Golden Box of the Jade Purity [Heaven], Transmitted by the Immortal Qinghua) : a *neidan* text ascribed to Zhang Boduan, but presumably composed by the Ming Dynasty Daoist Li Puye 李樸野

zaohua 造化 (fashioning, "creation") : term derives from the *Zhuangzi* and is generally used a synonym for the cosmos; the *neidan* process aims to go beyond *zaohua*, or to a different *zaohua*

Zazhu jiejing 雜著捷徑 (*Shortcut to the Dao: A Miscellany*) : a compilation of Cultivation of Perfection (*xiuzhen* 修真) texts mainly on longevity practices

Zazhu zhixuan pian 雜著指玄篇 (Directions to Mystery: A Miscellany) : collection of *neidan* texts by Bai Yuchan, his teachers, and disciples

Zhang Boduan 張伯端 (987?–1082) : first patriarch of the Southern Lineage of *neidan*, writer of the *Wuzhen pian*

Zhang Sanfeng 張三丰 or 張三峰 : a semilegendary Daoist associated during the Ming and Qing to the sexual techniques and/or sexual interpretation of *neidan*

Zhao Bichen 趙避塵 (1860–after 1933): a master of Wu-Liu lineage and founder of Thousand Peaks (Qianfeng 千峰) branch

Zhao Youqin 趙有欽 (fl. 1329) : Chen Zhixu's master

Zhenxian zhizhi yulu 真仙直指語錄 (Discourse Records and Direct Pointers of Perfected Immortals) : a collection of various Quanzhen discourse records

Zhenyizi 貞一子 (fl. ca. 1892) : commentator of the *Nüjindan xiajuan*

Zhengtong Daozang 正統道藏 : Daoist canon of the Zhengtong era

zhenxing 真行 ("perfect nature")

Zhenyuan 真元 (True Origin) : a textual lineage presumably representing a link between Shanqing and *neidan* (Robinet 1989b)

Zhonghe ji 中和集 (Anthology of Central Harmony) : the most renowned work of Li Daochun (fl. 1288–1290), associated later with the Central branch (Zhongpai) of *neidan*; trl. by Cleary, *The Book of Balance and Harmony*. San Francisco: North Point Press, 1989.

Zhongli Quan 鐘離權 : a semilegendary immortal at the source of many *neidan* lineages

Zhong-Lü 鍾呂 : refers to a lineage and literary corpus of Song dynasty attributed to the semilegendary immortals Zhongli Quan and Lü Dongbin, and their putative disciple Shi Jianwu 施肩吾 (fl. 820–835)

Zhong-Lü chuandao ji 鍾呂傳道集 (Anthology of the Transmission of the Dao from Zhongli Quan to Lü Dongbin) : the main Zhong-Lü text, transmitted by Shi Jianwu; trl. Kohn 2020

zhouhou feijin 肘後飛金 ("causing [the essence of] metal to ascend by the back of the body") : an expression indicative of Zhong-Lü lineage and a practice equivalent to *huanjing bunao*

zhu 注/註 (commentary) : a literary genre

Zhouyi cantong qi 周易參同契 (The Seal of the Unity of the Three, in Accordance with the Book of Changes) : An alchemical text traditionally attributed to Wei Boyang, theoretical foundation of much of *neidan*. Trl. Pregadio 2011.

Zhouyi cantong qi fahui 周易參同契發揮 (Clarification of the *Cantong qi*) : the magnum opus of Yu Yan, completed in 1284

zhuan 傳 (hagiography) : a literary genre

Zhuangzi 莊子 (Book of Master Zhuang) : also known as *Nanhua zhenjing* 南華真經, a central text of classical Daoism

zhuji 築基 ("laying the foundations") : the preliminary stage of *neidan*

ziran 自然 ("suchness, spontaneous, natural, so of its own") : a term deriving from the *Daode jing*

zuobo 坐鉢 ("sitting around the bowl") : form of communal meditation practiced in the Quanzhen monastic order